Sunday, March 22, 2026 No 80 ₹8

DH on Sunday

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The Power of Good

Jury finds Elon Musk misled investors during Twitter purchase

But absolves him of some fraud allegations

P8

Karnataka's Yashaswini Ghorpade crowned National champ

Representing PSPB, Bengaluru girl becomes only the third from state to win TT title

P9

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Iran targets US-UK base 4,000 km away

Unsuccessful bid on Diego Garcia points to Tehran's missile range

LONDON, AFP

Iran was "unsuccessful" in targeting the joint UK-US Indian Ocean military base at Diego Garcia, a UK official source confirmed to AFP on Saturday, after the Wall Street Journal reported Tehran fired two ballistic missiles at it.

Diego Garcia, which is around 4,000 km from Iranian territory, is one of the two bases the UK has allowed the United States to use for "defensive operations" in its war against Iran.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Friday, citing US officials, that while neither of the two ballistic missiles hit their target the launch suggests that Tehran has missiles with longer ranges than previously thought.

The Pentagon declined to comment.

On Friday, the UK government said it would allow Washington to use its bases in Diego Garcia and Fairford in southwest England to target Iranian "missile sites and capabilities being used to attack ships in the Strait of Hormuz".

The UK official source confirmed that Iran's "unsuccessful targeting of Diego Garcia" took place before Friday's announcement.

One of the missiles failed in flight, and the other was targeted by an interceptor fired from a US warship, though it was not clear if the missile was hit, the WSJ reported.

"Iran's reckless attacks, lashing out across the region and holding hostage the Strait of Hormuz, are a threat to British interests and British allies," a UK Ministry of Defence spokesperson said Saturday.

"This government has given permission to the US to use British bases for specific and limited defensive operations."

US President Donald Trump has been critical of UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's response to the war against Iran, initially refusing to be involved before allowing Washington limited use of the two bases.

American forces have stationed bombers and other equipment at Diego Garcia, a key hub for Asia operations, including the US bombing campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Trump has also slammed Britain's decision to hand back the Chagos Islands to Mauritius after holding it since the 1960s. Under that agreement, the UK would maintain a lease for the base on Diego Garcia, the largest of the islands.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told his UK counterpart Yvette Cooper on a Thursday phone call that any US use of British bases would be considered "participation in aggression", according to Tehran's foreign ministry.

In turn, Cooper warned Araghchi "against targeting UK bases, territory or interests directly", according to a UK foreign office statement.

STRATEGIC BASE

Diego Garcia is part of the Chagos Archipelago

- The US has described it as "indispensable"
- It's an Indian Ocean island that is home to a UK-US military base
- The island a hub for US operations in West Asia and beyond
- Home to about 2,500 mostly American personnel
- It has supported US military ops from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan

"Iran's reckless attacks, lashing out across the region and holding hostage the Strait of Hormuz, are a threat to British interests and British allies.

UK Ministry of Defence spokesperson

RAGING CONFLICT

- Iran says its **Natanz nuclear facility** hit in airstrike
- The US waives sanctions on the purchase of Iranian oil at sea for 30 days
- Trump mulls **'winding down'** military operations
- US announces it is sending more **warships and Marines** to the region
- Saudi Arabia says it has downed **20 drones** in a couple of hours in the country's east

In call with Modi, Iran Prez moots regional security plan

In a phone call with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday, PM Narendra Modi condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in West Asia and called for keeping the critical shipping lanes "open and secure", amid major disruption in global energy supplies in view of Tehran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. Significantly, the Iranian President proposed setting up a regional security framework comprising West Asian countries to bring peace and stability in the region "without foreign interference," according to an Iranian readout.

Details on Page 6

Govt hikes commercial LPG allocation to 50%

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Union government on Saturday announced an additional 20% allocation of commercial LPG to states and Union Territories, raising the total allocation to 50% of the pre-crisis level, amid an improvement in domestic output.

The additional allocation will come into effect from Monday (March 23).

Soon after the West Asia conflict erupted on February 28, the government paused the distribution of commercial LPG to establishments, including hotels, to prioritise domestic consumers.

Later, 20% percent of commercial supplies was restored, followed by an additional 10%, subject to states expediting piped natural gas (PNG) projects.

▸ **LPG, Page 6**

Popular anti-obesity, diabetes drug gets cheaper in India

Indian firms launch generic versions as semaglutide goes off patent

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With patent protection for Novo Nordisk's best-selling medicine semaglutide expiring in India, at least eight Indian companies on Saturday launched cheaper generic versions of the drug that gained widespread popularity across the world not only for controlling diabetes but also as an anti-obesity medicine.

The Indian pharmaceutical companies that announced launching the medicine include Torrent, Alkem, Sun Pharma, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Genmark, Natco Pharma, Zydus and USV. A few other firms are also likely to launch similar products.

Semaglutide belongs to a class of medicines known as GLP-1 receptor that help the body release insulin smarter, induce slow digestion and reduce appetite. Worldwide, several pharmaceutical majors have developed these drugs for diabetes and obesity management.

Denmark-headquartered Novo Nordisk has two such products – Ozempic for diabetes and Wegovy for obesity control. On Friday, its patent protection in India on these two medicines expired, paving the way for Indian companies to launch the generic versions.

In a statement, Alkem Laboratories, Mumbai said the company launched its semaglutide pre-filled disposable injection pen at a price starting Rs 450 per week or Rs 1,800 for a month's dosage.

The company received approval from the Drugs Controller General of India for manufacturing and marketing semaglutide for type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic weight management as an adjunct to diet and exercise, subsequent to a review of its Phase 3 clinical trials conducted in India.

All the Indian generics are substantially cheaper – the prices vary between Rs 1,300 and Rs 4,500 per month - than the original ones that cost anywhere between Rs 8,800 and Rs 11,175 for the anti-diabetic formulation and between 10,850 and 16,400 for the obesity medicine.

Most of the companies launched their semaglutide brands in India in oral and injectable formulations. They also made it clear that the medicine is a prescription product and should be taken under appropriate medical supervision.

In December 2025, the World Health Organisation released its first guideline on the use of GLP-1 therapies for treating obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease in order to address the growing global health challenge of obesity, which affects more than one billion people.

▸ **Diabetes drug, Page 6**

DESI DRUGS

- Prices of Indian generics vary between Rs 1,300 and Rs 4,500 a month
- Original ones cost anywhere between Rs 8,800 and Rs 11,175 for the anti-diabetic formulation and between 10,850 and 16,400 for the obesity medicine
- Most of the companies launched semaglutide brands in India in oral and injectable formulations

BWSSB to launch OTS scheme to recover dues

BENGALURU, DHNS: To recover dues to the tune of Rs 550 crore, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will launch a one-time settlement (OTS) scheme for consumers on April 1. The scheme will be valid for three months till June.

As per the scheme, the BWSSB will waive the interest on pending water bills if the defaulters pay up the complete principal amount. The scheme is open to all categories of consumers — domestic, commercial and industrial users. Various government departments and institutions also owe BWSSB close to Rs 175 crore in dues and the scheme applies to these departments as well.

Of the 11 lakh connections under BWSSB, around 5.11 lakh connections have pending bills and the total dues go up to Rs 851.33 crore. Of the total dues, Rs 539.43 crore is principal amount and the remaining Rs 311.90 crore corresponds to interest accrued, which will be completely waived.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar announced the OTS scheme here on Saturday.

▸ **BWSSB, Page 6**

Govt removes domestic airfare caps

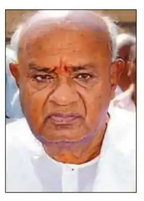
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, PTI: The Union government has removed temporary caps on domestic airfares that were imposed in the wake of the IndiGo flight disruptions in December last year.

The airfare caps removal will be effective from March 23, according to an order issued by the civil aviation ministry.

Details on Page 6

BJP to back Gowda's re-election to RS with future polls in mind?

BENGALURU, DHNS



Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda is likely to get re-elected to Rajya Sabha from Karnataka.

Deve Gowda from the JD(S), Mallikarjun Kharge of Congress, Iranna Kadadi and K Narayan from the BJP are the four Rajya Sabha members from Karnataka who will complete their terms in June.

As these four seats have to be elected by members of the state Assembly (MLAs), the BJP, which has two seats, will now lose one automatically and has the opportunity to elect only one person considering its representation in the state.

According to state BJP sources, its leaders are not fully onboard with the idea of re-electing Gowda. However, the saffron party's leadership is said to be favouring the former prime minister keeping in mind future polls. "Giving up the Rajya Sabha seat will help the BJP during seat negotiations with their alliance partner in future," sources in the party said.

In the recent core committee meeting of the state BJP, a majority of leaders expressed displeasure over the idea of electing Gowda. Some senior leaders even proposed former chief minister Sadananda Gowda's name. "As the decision will ultimately be taken by the high command, we have no option but to vote for the candidate finalised by the party," said a senior BJP legislator.

Another leader explained that supporting Deve Gowda now will help the BJP win the confidence of the Vokkaliga community since one of the largest communities of Karnataka still accepts him as its leader.

▸ **Gowda, Page 5**

Maha option on cards?

There were reports about Deve Gowda being elected from Maharashtra as the BJP has more votes there compared to Karnataka. But sources from JD(S) denied this and said Gowda will be voice of Karnataka and will be re-elected from Karnataka.

Rs 5.98 lakh pay: Guarantee panel head gets 2x CS

BHARATH JOSHI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority chairperson HM Revanna gets a monthly paycheck of Rs 5.98 lakh, the government has revealed.

To put this in perspective, the chief secretary, the administrative head of the state, has a fixed pay of Rs 2.25 lakh per month, and her gross salary, inclusive of various perks, may cross Rs 3 lakh.

In February alone, the government spent Rs 6.51 lakh on 12 personnel in Revanna's office, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah told the Legislative Assembly in a written reply.

When contacted, Revanna, who holds a Cabinet rank, said: "The sum being provided is the uniform remuneration paid for all chairpersons of different government bodies. So, this isn't a specific provision or grant created for the post of chairperson of the Guarantee Implementation Authority."

The Authority, created in January 2024, is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the five flagship 'guarantee' schemes of the Congress government. In 2026-27, the government has allocated Rs 51,286 crore for the five schemes. Since 2023, the government has spent over Rs 1.21 lakh crore on them.

The Authority has five vice-chairpersons, each having the status of a minister of state — SR Patil, Suraj Hegde, Pushpa Amarnath, SR Mehroz Khan and Dinesh Gooligowda. Each gets a monthly salary of Rs 4.43 lakh. They have 49 staff working in their offices, resulting in an expenditure of Rs 20.63 lakh in February.

Besides the state committee, the government also has district-level and taluk-level panels. The district committee chairperson's salary is Rs 40,000 and the vice-chairperson's is Rs 10,000.

▸ **Guarantee panel, Page 6**

Guaranteed expenses

Rs 4.43L
Salary of each of 5 **vice-chairpersons**

Rs 6.51L
Expenses on **12 staff** in chairman's office

Rs 20.63L
Expenses on **49 staff** in vice-chairpersons' offices

Violence in Mathura after death of cow vigilante

LUCKNOW, DHNS: Large-scale violence erupted in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, after a cow vigilante known as 'Farsa Baba' was allegedly run over by a speeding truck on Saturday while he was 'inspecting' vehicles following a tip-off about alleged cattle smuggling.

The incident sparked protests and a highway blockade on a day when President Droupadi Murmu was visiting Mathura district. Angry locals blocked the national highway, triggering traffic snarls that stretched for several kilometres.

District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh said the incident took place around 4 am when the vigilante, identified as Chandrashekhar, along with his associates, stopped a Nagaland-registered container on suspicion of transporting cattle. The vehicle, however, was found to be carrying grocery items.

Details on Page 7

EID PRAYERS

A young boy participates in a mass prayer on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr on Millers Road in Bengaluru on Saturday. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

Quickly

Social welfare dept asst director ends life in office

A 60-year-old assistant director with Social Welfare department, schedule to retire by the end of this month, ended his life at his office on Friday night. The deceased has been identified as Mallikarjunaiah, who hailed from Gundarlahalli, Tumakuru district. Mallikarjunaiah had lodged a complaint with the DySP at Madhugiri and also at Pavagada police station on Friday morning, accusing Krishnappa, Joint Director of Social Welfare Department, of harassing him.

DMK's seat-sharing talks with allies hit a roadblock

Seat-sharing talks within the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) for the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls have hit a roadblock due to persisting differences between the DMK and junior partners such as the CPM, VCK, and actor Kamal Haasan's MNM. Once an agreement is reached, the DMK will formally launch negotiations with the DMDK and a few small parties that have been inducted into the alliance.

Details on Page 7

Study maps antibiotic resistance across country

Researchers from the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and partner institutions found common antimicrobial resistance (AMR) genes in bacteria across Indian cities. Antimicrobial drugs like antibiotics kill bacteria and protect humans from many deadly bacterial diseases. But bacteria are becoming resistant to antibiotics.

Details on Page 7

14 killed in South Korea car plant fire

Fourteen people were killed in a fire at a car parts factory in South Korea that also injured 59 others, authorities told AFP on Saturday, updating a previous toll of 11 fatalities. Fire crews were initially unable to enter the factory in the city of Daejeon to look for survivors due to the risk of the building collapsing. Around 170 workers were at the plant when the fire broke out.

'Umbrella' law on CAPFs: Bill on Monday

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will introduce in the Rajya Sabha on Monday an "umbrella law" for central armed police forces (CAPFs) to regulate recruitment, deputation, promotion and other conditions of services of their officers, according to the List of Business issued by the House. The Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026, provides that for the purposes of appointment of officers from the IPS in CAPFs, 50% of the posts will be filled by deputation in the rank of Inspector General.

UNI sealing: Journalists' bodies condemn cops

Four prominent journalists' organisations – the Press Club of India (PCI), the Editors Guild of India (EGI), the Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC) and the Press Association (PA) – on Saturday condemned the alleged "manhandling" of journalists and "use of excessive force" by Delhi Police while sealing the premises of news agency United News of India. They said the police showed "undue haste" in implementing a court order that cancelled the land allotment to UNI.

Ex-FBI director, who probed Trump, dies

Robert S Mueller III, the FBI director who transformed the US law enforcement agency into a terrorism-fighting force and who later became special counsel in charge of investigating ties between Russia and Donald Trump's presidential campaign, has died. He was 81. Trump posted on social media about Mueller's death: "Robert Mueller just died. Good, I'm glad he's dead."

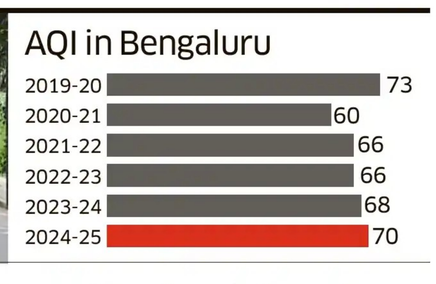
BREATHING EASY

B'luru's air pollution dipped by 4% between 2020 & 2025

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Even as concerns around the air quality in Bengaluru grow, the government has claimed that air pollution in the city came down by as much as 4.11% between 2019-20 and 2024-25. According to a written response presented before the Legislative Council, the AQI in Bengaluru has improved marginally between 2019-20 and 2024-25.

The government claimed that the 44-point action plan that has been implemented to tackle air pollution since May 2019 has shown results and hence pollution levels have remained lower.



The action plan included various workable programmes that were to be taken up by various departments. From bringing down vehicular emissions to better waste management to transitioning to electric vehicles, the action plan included a host of measures.

"According to the 'Source Apportionment and Emission Inventory Study' carried out by Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), vehicular emissions contribute close to 18.6% of air pollution in the city. Hence, the transport department is conducting regular vehicle checks to determine vehicular emission rates and is promoting use of electric vehicles by lowering taxes on them," the written response said.

In the last three years, the transport department has checked close to six lakh vehicles to check for emission levels and has recorded close to 70,000 violations.

That apart, the government has also opened up retrofitment centres to promote retrofitting of diesel and petrol vehicles with compressed natural gas (CNG) and electric propulsion kits. Various other departments have also been taking measures to bring down dust and other factors.

▸ **Pollution, Page 6**

Bengaluru Sunday, March 22, 2026 Pages 20 Vol 79 No 80 ₹8

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Arbitration no mere tool to unclog courts: CJI

P4

Travel *Page16*

Peak happiness

From stunning backdrops to ancient monasteries and its mindfulness culture, Bhutan is a land of many wonders

Art & Pursuits *Page18*

Notes on the big cat

Sarod brothers Amaan and Ayaan have tuned into India's wilderness for their new album

Books *Page15*

Shakespearean twist

A few recent novels are not merely adapting the Bard's plays but are also engaging with their complexities

Food & Drink *Page17*

A pinch of AI

Nutmeg with citrus peel or long pepper with chocolate — will AI's unusual pairings work in our kitchens?

Millions of workers, minimum safety in construction boom

Safety lapses, procedural hurdles and underutilised welfare funds leave construction workers in Karnataka both vulnerable and unprotected

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Between 2020–21 and 2025–26, 223 construction workers lost their lives in Karnataka.
REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE: DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

INSIGHT

On February 17, Mallesh Mishiyavar (46) and Akbar Goususaab Sangati (35) were plastering the outer wall of a seven-floor medical college under construction on the outskirts of Hubballi when a scaffolding knot snapped, causing them to fall to their deaths.

Although they were rushed to a nearby private hospital, both were declared dead on arrival by the doctors.

Accounts from the construction site indicated that the scaffolding, tied just the night before, was not secure. Mallesh and Akbar, exhausted from a week of double shifts to earn a little extra income may have failed to notice the rope loosening.

Work came to a standstill as labourers staged a snap protest after the accident, demanding better safety measures and proper compensation for the deceased workers. The next morning, the mason contractor drove his goods vehicle to Hubballi Railway Station Road, where people seeking daily wage labour gather daily, waiting to be picked up for work at wages as low as Rs 500–Rs 750 a day.

Over a month after the accident, construction at the medical college goes on in full swing, while the victims' families struggle to move forward with their lives.

"Mallesh was the sole breadwinner for his family of four. The society, which is building the medical college, gave us around Rs 8.75 lakh. We haven't heard yet from the government. Whatever money we received was spent for his final rites and clearing debts," says Mallesh's brother Manjunath. He seeks financial security for Mallesh's wife and their two sons, who are still in school.

According to the rules, both Mallesh and Akbar's families should receive Rs five lakh each as government compensation, while the courts typically determine the amount the builders are required to pay.

In Mysuru, Saddam (32) of Ghousia Nagar met a similar fate when he was buried alive under debris from a portion of the old building of Maharani's Science College for Women on Jhansi Lakshmi Bai Road. On January 28, 2025, he and 12 other labourers were removing old windows and doors from the 108-year-old building, which was under renovation, when part of the dilapidated structure collapsed. Although rescue personnel rushed to help, they were unable to save Saddam, while others managed to escape to safety.

A case was filed against the contractor for failing to implement adequate safety measures. Saddam's family received a compensation of Rs five lakh under the guidelines of the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 1996.

Construction work is inherently one of the most dangerous occupations.

▸ **Construction workers' problems, Page 2**

Menstrual leave and workplace equality debate

Recognising menstruation as a biological reality must be paired with policy and workplace sensitisation

MANDAR PRAKHAR

The SUNDAY STORY

Recently, the Apex Court dismissed a public interest litigation seeking to mandate a nationwide menstrual leave policy, noting that such measures fall within the government's domain and cannot be imposed by judicial fiat.

The bench, led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, cautioned that while menstrual pain can be genuine and debilitating, compulsory leave could inadvertently 'reinforce stereotypes' that discourage employers from hiring women. The court observed that mandating such leave might create the impression that women are less capable and less productive, potentially harming their careers. The court urged the authorities to consult stakeholders and devise a balanced way forward. Notably, this judicial observation comes against the backdrop of *Dr Jaya Thakur v Union of India*, a case that formally recognised menstrual health as a fundamental right.

This judicial stance raises a complex dilemma: do gender-specific interventions advance gender equality, or do they risk reinforcing prejudicial bias? On one hand, acknowledging biological differences can help reduce stigma, as reflected in several state-level policies that grant menstrual leave to large female workforces. These initiatives are grounded in the understanding that women may experience significant pain and discomfort during menstruation, and that providing leave supports their well-being and productivity.

▸ **Menstrual leave policy, Page 2**

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Lack of training raises accident risk

Construction workers' problems, from Page 1

According to data from the Karnataka Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, 223 construction workers lost their lives between 2020–21 and 2025–26 in the state, while seven workers sustained injuries in workplace accidents. Experts and trade union members say the actual numbers could be higher, as many cases go unreported.

The board reports nearly 27.68 lakh active registered construction labourers in Karnataka, but trade union members estimate that the total, including unregistered workers, could be around 41.65 lakh, making construction the state's second-largest employment sector after agriculture.

Nearly 30% of labourers in the construction sector are unregistered. For many farmers, construction work is seasonal or part-time, taken up mainly during the lean phase in agriculture. Most labourers lack formal training, which increases the risk of accidents.

This reflects a broader national trend. A 2021 study by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi says that every year nearly 48,000 people involved in the construction sector die in India by falling from great heights, electrocutions, and falling walls and scaffolding.

Unrecorded accidents

K Mahantesh, general secretary of the Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Federation, says that Karnataka records an average of 75–80 construction worker deaths at sites each year. The number of injuries and cases of permanent disability is at least three times higher, he adds.

Several labour union members told *DH* that, in smaller projects, paying compensation to the families of deceased labourers is often seen as cheaper than implementing proper safety measures.

A senior police officer from the Bengaluru East Division said that in cases where workers die at construction sites due to alleged negligence, police register cases under Section 106 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023. Contractors and private construction companies are booked for causing death by negligence. However, securing convictions remains a challenge, as co-workers and victims' families often fail to appear as witnesses during court proceedings.

Most of the deceased workers are migrants from other states, and their families often leave the city after the incident. As a result, only a few cases end in conviction. In some instances, contractors or companies persuade families to accept out-of-court settlements by offering monetary compensation.

Negligence, poor enforcement of safety measures and hazardous working conditions are the primary causes of casualties at construction sites. Experts say falls from heights remain the leading cause of deaths and injuries in the sector, as builders often fail to install guardrails and safety nets or provide basic protective gear.

Electrocution and machinery-related accidents are also major risks. Exposed wiring, unsafe electrical connections and inadequate grounding frequently lead to electrocution. Accidents involving heavy machinery such as cranes, lifts and concrete mixers are common, especially when operated by untrained workers.

Vasanth Achari, secretary of the Dakshina Kannada district committee of the Karnataka State Building and Other Construction Workers' Federation, says that at large construction sites workers are generally provided with safety gear. However, at smaller sites with fewer labourers, safety measures are often neglected. He says that nearly 70% of construction in Karnataka occurs at smaller sites.

The situation of women migrant labourers with young children is particularly dire. Often, women tie a cloth cradle to a tree near the construction site to let their child sleep.

Belagavi-based builder Santosh Kulkarni says that builders prefer to hire skilled labourers, yet their availability is scarce. Many workers are often inconsistent, forcing builders to rely on whoever is available, even those without necessary skills or training, he adds.

He says the state government has formulated many rules to protect the interest of the construction labourers. However, there are several guidelines that are impractical for implementation.

Santosh cites the 'Letter of Appointment' provision in the notification issued under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (Karnataka) Rules, 2021. "Implementing this provision is nearly impossible, as many workers are illiterate and can be easily manipulated by contractors and builders. Also, the likelihood of the same labourers returning to work regularly is low," he says.

Amit Rao, a Hubballi-based builder, says that although his company provides insurance and health benefits, most workers do not benefit because sub-contractors hire different labourers each day, whose names are not included in the original contract or insurance list.

Under the Code on Social Security, 2020, the Union government has empowered Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board in every state to provide death and disability compensation, pensions, insurance, education for workers' children, medical expenses for major ailments, maternity benefits, hostel facilities, and to formulate other welfare schemes. However, experts say that these provisions often exist only on paper.

Bengaluru-based legal expert Maitreyi Krishnan says, "Construction work remains one of the most hazardous occupations, making preventive safety measures critical. The Building and Other Construction Workers Act previously provided several safeguards for workers' safety and welfare. However, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, which has replaced the Act, does not retain many of these key protections."

Labour activists also point out that enforcement of safety and welfare measures has weakened due to a severe shortage of officials in the labour department. As a result, violations such as non-payment of minimum wages and gender-based wage discrimination continue to be reported. While workers injured in accidents are legally entitled to compensation from both employers and the Construction Workers' Welfare Board, the implementation of these provisions remains uncertain.

Activists emphasise that the Welfare Board must ensure universal registration of construction workers and make it mandatory for every employer to register their workers, enabling them to access social security benefits.

Registration of employees has become more complicated with the introduction of the online system. According to Yashoda P, office bearer of the Domestic Workers Rights Union, "Previously, labour cards were renewed once every three years, but now they must be renewed annually. The government has also introduced an 'e-card' for the families of construction labourers. However, this requires submitting four different sets of documents, which is difficult and time-consuming for the families."

Labour welfare

Labour activists also point out that the cess collected from builders and construction companies is not being used for its intended purpose.

K Mahantesh says that between 2007 and 2025, Karnataka collected a whopping Rs 13,000 crore under the building cess for the welfare of labourers. "Nearly 65% of these funds remain unutilised. It is unfortunate that the previous two governments have used this money for other development works, even though the rules clearly state that it should be spent only for the benefit of construction labourers," he adds.

Builders also complain that funds collected from them by the government are not utilised at their site.

Suresh Hari, former chairman of the Bengaluru circle of Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI), says every builder pays the cess even before the work commences at their sites. "We never know where the collected funds are being utilised as the government hasn't made much facilities for the labourers locally."

He calls for universal registration of construction workers so that irrespective of where the labourer comes from they should be provided with social and financial security.

Another member of CREDAI, requesting anonymity, said the government should refrain from harassing builders and construction companies after a tragedy occurs at their sites.

"We may provide all the safety gears and precautionary measures to prevent tragedies; if the labourers do not use them, how can we be held responsible? There are sub-contracts, floating labourers and unskilled workers at the site, making us scapegoats is a matter of concern," he says.

According to A H Umesha, Joint Secretary of the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board, site safety is governed by the Building and Other Construction Workers Act of 1996. Enforcement is divided by project scale: the Department of Factories and Boilers oversees projects valued at Rs 25 crores and above, while Labour Officers manage smaller sites.

"In Bengaluru, a team of eight officers conducts inspections to ensure the presence of safety plans and essential equipment like helmets, shoes and safety nets. If violations such as inadequate barricading or improper excavation are found, the department issues notices and may proceed with prosecution," he says.

Umesha says that of the total Rs 13,000 crore collected as cess since 2007, nearly Rs 7,700 crore remains unspent. "The amount is invested in nationalised banks through a tender process. The interest earned from these investments, along with the principal, is utilised for welfare schemes, social security, and Direct Benefit Transfer programmes," he adds.

(With inputs from Ashwin B M and Manjunath Shettar in Bengaluru, Naina J A in Mangaluru, Shilpa P in Mysuru and Vittal Shastri in Kalaburagi)

Invisible workers, SILENT STRUGGLES

- Construction, the second largest economic activity in India after agriculture, contributes **9.1%** to the national GDP
- Construction sector is the second-largest employment generator in India, employing nearly **7.1 crore** people in 2023
- Since 2020, atleast **223** construction workers have lost their lives and seven have been injured at worksites in **Karnataka**
- **Rs 5.6 crore** in compensation has been provided to the families of the deceased and **Rs 10 lakh** to the injured

Missing out on benefits*

5 crore
Total construction workers in India

2.9 crore
Registered under the Building and Other Construction Workers Act

1 crore
Active benefit recipients

15%
Female registration rate in most states

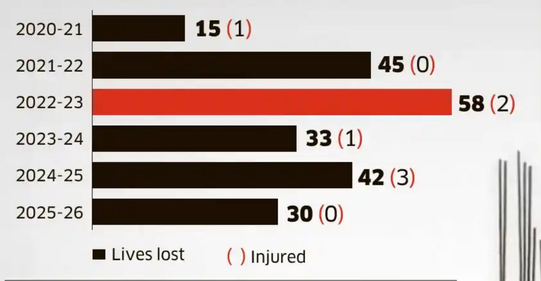
10%
Creches at construction sites are covered

*Approximate

Registration gaps (2018-2023)

Labour offices	Building plans sanctioned	Work agreements executed	Total	Registered establishments as per Labour office	Pending registration
Mysuru	1,277	1,674	2,951	38	2,913
Davangere	5,188	1,311	6,499	4	6,495
Hubballi	9,242	3,212	12,454	12	12,440
Bidar	879	5,404	6,283	19	6,264

Construction site fatalities



27.86 lakh
Number of registered construction workers in **Karnataka**

Occupational risks

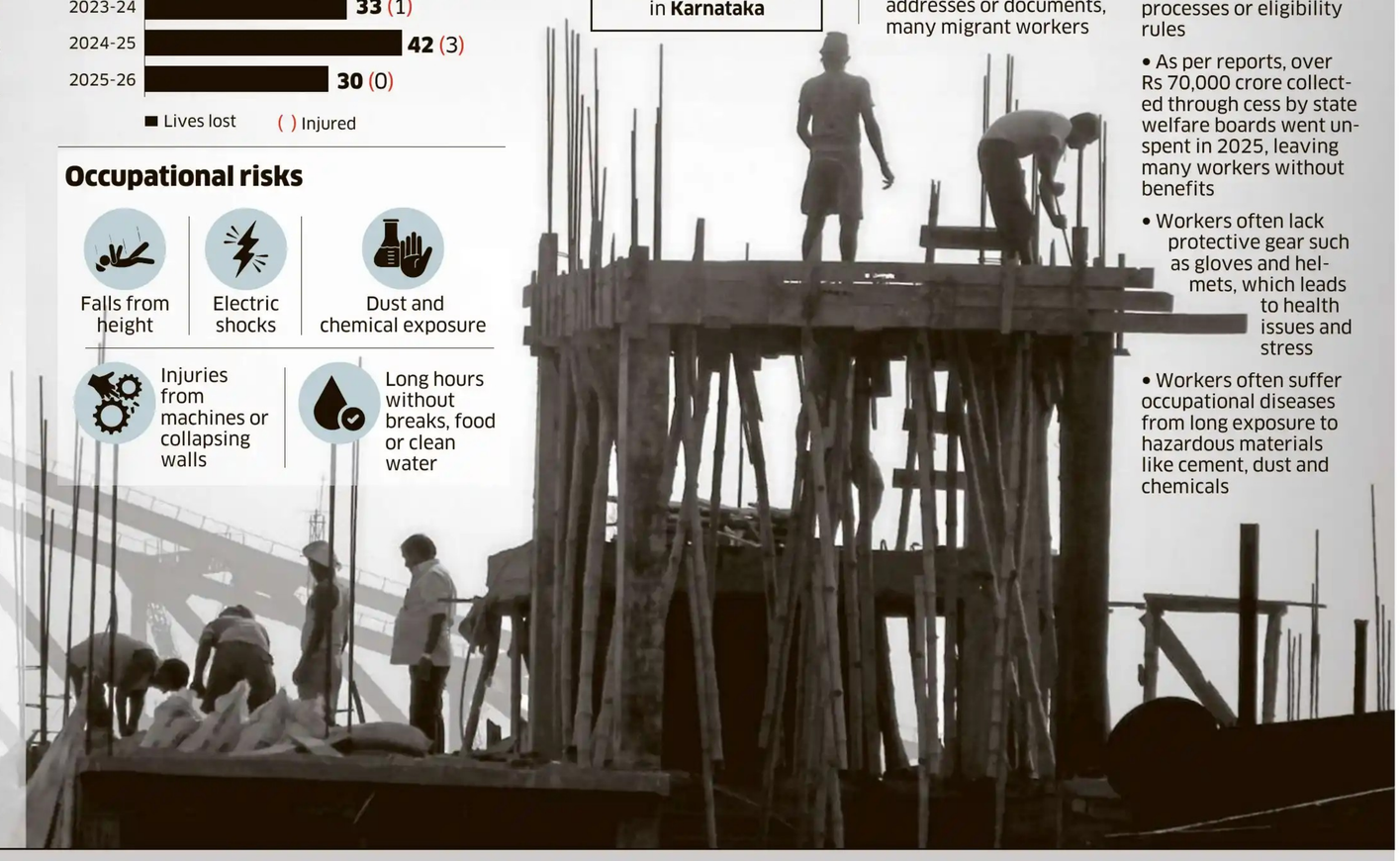
- Falls from height
- Electric shocks
- Dust and chemical exposure
- Injuries from machines or collapsing walls
- Long hours without breaks, food or clean water

Entitlements for workers

- **Registration:** Construction workers aged 18–60 with at least 90 days of work can register with a State Welfare Board for government benefits
- **Welfare benefits:** Registered workers are eligible for healthcare, children's education support, accident relief, disability compensation and other benefits
- **Fair wages:** Workers can work up to 48 hours a week and are entitled to timely wages, rest breaks, a weekly day off and overtime pay
- **Complaint reporting:** Workers can approach state welfare boards, labour inspectors or NGOs to report unsafe conditions, wage issues, denied benefits or workplace harassment
- **Safe environment:** Employers must provide safety gear, clean drinking water, toilets, first aid, emergency medical care, and ensure safe scaffolding and equipment

Why construction workers suffer

- The construction sector is largely informal, so workers often lack guaranteed or regular employment
- Without permanent addresses or documents, many migrant workers cannot access welfare programmes
- Many workers have low literacy, making it difficult to understand paperwork, government processes or eligibility rules
- As per reports, over Rs 70,000 crore collected through cess by state welfare boards went unspent in 2025, leaving many workers without benefits
- Workers often lack protective gear such as gloves and helmets, which leads to health issues and stress
- Workers often suffer occupational diseases from long exposure to hazardous materials like cement, dust and chemicals



RECENT CONSTRUCTION SITE ACCIDENTS

MARCH 2026
- Seven people were killed and four injured when a soil mound collapsed in Gurugram
- A couple died when a wall collapsed at a construction site in Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune

FEB 2026
- Two labourers died after falling from the 6th floor of an under-construction medical college in Hubballi
- A man died and three others were injured when a parapet segment collapsed on Mumbai Metro Line 4

JAN 2026
- An operator and a mechanic died when a material lift collapsed at a construction site in Bengaluru
- A centering worker died of spinal injuries after falling from the first flood of an under-construction house in Kalaburagi's Kesaratagi village

OCT 2025
- Two workers from West Bengal died after falling from the 13th floor of an under-construction building in Bengaluru

Sources: D&B Report on Indian Construction Industry, government data, IJLR paper: 'A critical analysis of problems faced by building and other construction workers in India', KARBWWB, CAG report, media reports

COMPILED BY DIVYASHRI MUDAKAVI DH GRAPHICS: GURU PRASATH R

Worker welfare faces safety gaps

In conversation with *DH*'s **Pavan Kumar H**, Karnataka Labour Minister **Santosh Lad** explains the measures the government has taken for the welfare of construction labourers while acknowledging the need for more effective enforcement of worker safety guidelines. Excerpts:

The Karnataka Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board has substantial funds, but utilisation has been low. Is the money being diverted for other purposes?

The Welfare Board holds around Rs 8,000 crore in its account. Funds can only be spent according to the guidelines. Every year, the accounts undergo third-party audits. There is no provision to use these funds for anything other than the welfare of construction labourers. Our government has introduced additional provisions to ensure that a large number of beneficiaries can benefit from these funds.

Why are a large number of construction workers, particularly migrants, still unregistered?

When I took charge of the department in 2023, there were nearly 58 lakh registered construction labourers in the state. We have weeded out nearly 25 lakh fake cardholders and are preventing fund pilferage.

Karnataka is the first state to introduce mobile medical clinics for construction labourers. Each district has three to four such vehicles that visit construction sites to provide preventive treatment to labourers, regardless of their registration status. For unregistered workers, officials collect their details and enroll them into the system.

Menstrual leave policy, from Page 1

The need to ensure menstrual health without jeopardising jobs

Contrarily, there are concerns that mandatory menstrual leave policies could inadvertently widen gender gaps in hiring. Such outcomes risk entrenching benevolent sexism, where differential treatment, though seemingly protective, is rooted in assumptions about women's biology. In this view, a policy intended to support women could, in practice, end up harming them.

Sandra Fredman's substantive equality framework, judicially recognised in cases such as *Jane Kaushik v Union of India*, helps navigate this complex dichotomy. At its core, the framework goes beyond formal recognition and calls for addressing the structural disadvantages arising from biological differences or social taboos.

Stigma and silence

Menstruation has long been a source of stigma and silence, undermining women's access to education and work. Recognising it as a legitimate well-being concern is only the first step; Fredman's four-pronged model calls for a broader approach — providing health support, addressing stigma, and ensuring that women are not penalised for accessing such support. Ultimately, substantive equality requires that women be able to make informed choices without fear of judgement. A fair policy, therefore, should enable them to manage menstrual discomfort without risking their job security.

Combating unintended discrimination requires menstrual leave policies to rest on two essential aspects: health-support accommodations and anti-bias protections. The former includes logistical measures such as stocked restrooms, adjustable workstations and flexible breaks, while the latter entails workplace norms that prevent any punitive measures against women for availing menstrual leave. Without these safeguards, even a well-intentioned policy could end up affecting women adversely.

In the absence of a dedicated framework, menstruating women are compelled to avail themselves of such leaves under the existing medical or sick-leave provisions. Some firms have experimented with alternative measures such as designated wellness days or permitting remote work during this period.

Nevertheless, these practices remain either regressive in conception or sporadic in implementation, underscoring the urgent need for a coherent policy framework.

Another major concern in discussions on menstrual leave is the financial strain on organisations. Imposing blanket policy measures without addressing funding risks creating under-resourced and burdensome obligations for employers. In such situations, employers may begin to view these provisions as a costly liability, potentially discouraging the hiring of women and reinforcing workplace bias rather than alleviating it.

To address this, a cost-sharing model could be explored so that the financial burden does not rest solely on employers. In practical terms, if such policies are to be mandated in the country, the government could consider offering tax concessions, reducing employer contributions or subsidising smaller enterprises. Additionally, organisations adopting such measures could be incentivised through ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) benchmarks, diversity certifications or priority access to government schemes. These steps can help mitigate concerns that menstrual leave constitutes a financial liability.

Global practices

Comparative global practices offer useful guidance on this issue. A handful of countries have implemented menstrual leave policies, including Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Spain, as well as Zambia and Kenya. Japan, a pioneer in this regard, has had such a policy since 1947, allowing women to take leave, though employers retain discretion over whether it is paid.

Spain became the first European country to legislate on menstrual leave, offering fully paid leave through the public health system to prevent bias; however, the policy is limited to individuals diagnosed with conditions such as endometriosis. India already has the legal and judicial framework to address this issue constructively. It is now time to come together and have a serious discussion on how to ensure gender equality in the workplace.

The situation raises a crucial question: how can this goal be achieved? To answer it, we must turn to the substantive equality framework, which calls for carefully designed, gender-sensitive measures. In simple terms, achieving equality sometimes requires acknowledging biological realities, but ensuring that these differences do not become a basis for discrimination.

The best way to understand this is through the example of maternity leave. When such leave was first introduced, similar concerns about employers' reluctance to hire women dominated the debate.

Over time, however, it became clear that reproductive autonomy and caregiving are essential social functions that cannot be ignored in the name of workplace neutrality. This led to the introduction of maternity leave alongside robust anti-discrimination protections.

Similarly, menstrual leave by itself cannot guarantee equality; it must be paired with robust measures to ensure that women are not perceived as less desirable employees simply because such leave exists. Workplace sensitisation is equally crucial, so that menstruation is recognised as a normal biological process rather than a source of stigma. When these safeguards operate conjunctively, such policies can empower women instead of reinforcing stereotypes.

In conclusion, a comprehensive national menstrual leave policy should acknowledge menstruation as a biological reality without implying that women are less capable or productive. The jurisprudential foundations are already in place, what is now needed is the collective will to turn this vision into social reality.

(Mandar Prakhar is an Associate Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. Views are personal)

NOT FULLY TAPPED Board gears up for Cauvery stage 6 amid lukewarm response to stage 5

BWSSB anticipated a flood, but there is only a trickle

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Cabinet recently approved the Cauvery stage 6 project and it eventually featured in budget 2026-27.

While the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), through Cauvery stage 6 is planning to bring another 500 MLD of Cauvery water to the city, it is still struggling to get people to get water connections under Cauvery stage V, completed 18 months ago.

While BWSSB was initially expecting at least 3.5 lakh connections across 110 villages added to BBMP limits in 2008, the board has received applications only from close to 1.2 lakh residents so far.

BWSSB claims that development of the newly added areas was not on expected lines. So, the board has now revised the expected number of connections to 1.8 lakh.

Considering the revised estimate, only close to 70% of the people have come forward to get connections under stage 5.

According to BWSSB sources, many residents of areas serviced by Cauvery stage V are used to borewell water and hence are not keen to get new tap connections.

"While the monthly water bill may not be a burden for them, the initial cost for applying for a connection runs into thousands of rupees. Many in these areas are not convinced about paying so much. For years, they have depended on borewell water, which is free," a senior BWSSB official said.

"They started the project back in 2018 and made a few of us pay up right at the beginning. The project dragged on for over five years, missing multiple deadlines. Hence, many did not want to pay when BWSSB asked them to do so in 2024, when the project was nearing completion. They did not believe that water supply will start. Now that we are getting water supply, slowly people may start applying," said Abhaya K, a resident of North Bengaluru.

Considering that the upfront application cost was making it unaffordable for many citizens, BWSSB introduced 'Sarala Cauvery' scheme. Under this, the board provides EMI options for those applying for the tap connections.

For houses with a built-up area of up to 600 sq ft, residents can pay Rs 1,000 initially and the remaining amount in 12 equal monthly instalments, along with water use charges and a 0.15% service fee.

Owners of only close to 25,000 buildings have applied under the scheme, sources said.

While BWSSB acknowledged that there is some resistance among people, officials said the response is not very bad. "It takes time for people to apply and get connections. Over the last few months, applications are coming in and we are hopeful that we will achieve 100% coverage by 2027," said Dr Ramprasat Manohar V, chairman, BWSSB.

The board has been keeping a close watch to ensure people apply for connections legally.

Given the situation, there are concerns around how the response for Cauvery stage 6 will be. The board plans to supply close to 150 million litres per day (MLD) to urbanised centres like Anekal, Nelamangala, Hoskote and Devanahalli under stage 6.

"There will definitely be resistance among people to apply for connections there, since they are used to draw water from borewells and local water bodies. But if we are to look at it from a long-term vision, the project is much needed since these areas will get more urbanised and population will grow," a senior BWSSB official said.

Manohar said it was BWSSB's responsibility to ensure safe drinking water for all and hence the project was important.

"It is our fundamental duty to provide reliable water supply and we are working towards it. The groundwater may be contaminated and may lead to health concerns. So, we encourage people to use Cauvery water, wherever possible," he said.

Cauvery stage 6 is also crucial to ensure that Bengaluru draws all the water allotted to it from River Cauvery. While it might take years for people to opt for a connection, BWSSB officials said it was important to provide a safe and reliable alternative to groundwater.

The water supply projects will work towards preventing exploitation of groundwater, they said.

A view of the water purification unit at Thorekadanahalli in Malavalli taluk of Mandya district that supplies water to Bengaluru, under Cauvery stage 5 project. The BWSSB has received only 1.2 lakh applications across 110 villages added to BBMP limits in 2008, under stage 5, much less than what it had anticipated. DH FILE PHOTO

Cauvery water scheme over the years

Stage I	1974	135 MLD
Stage II	1982	135 MLD
Stage III	1994-95	270 MLD
Stage IV phase I	2002	270 MLD
Stage IV phase II	2012	500 MLD
Stage V	2024	775 MLD

Street vendors term main road ban by GBA a 'betrayal'

Threaten protest in city if authority goes ahead with proposal

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka Pragathi Para Beedhi Vyaparigala Sangha on Saturday condemned the state government's proposed policy to ban street vending on arterial and sub-arterial roads, labeling the move a "betrayal of the poor" and a conspiracy to reserve the city for the wealthy.

The association warned of city-wide protests if the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) does not immediately withdraw the proposal. The standoff follows Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's Friday announcement that a new policy would restrict vendors to designated zones to clear footpaths for pedestrians.

'Illegal and unconstitutional'

The association argued that the blanket ban violates the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. "The law clearly permits vending on streets and mandates that any such decision must be taken by Town Vending Committees (TVCs). However, these committees haven't even been constituted in the new municipal bodies," the association stated.

They further alleged that the government is punishing vendors for its own administrative failures. Despite the law being a decade old, thousands of vendors are yet to receive identity cards or be included in official surveys.

Challenging the narrative that vendors are the primary hurdle for pedestrians, the association pointed to the city's 63 lakh private vehicles. They claimed that road-widening for cars has eaten into footpath space, while encroachments by hotels, illegal transformers, and private parking by wealthy residents are the actual culprits. "A city that provides free parking for the rich cannot claim there is no space for the livelihoods of the poor," the association said.

'Vulnerable groups hit'

The association highlighted that the rule requiring vendors to take their carts home every night would disproportionately impact senior citizens and those living in cramped rented houses. "Bengaluru cannot become a 'world-class city' by erasing its vendors. We demand an immediate end to all evictions and the full implementation of the 2014 Act," the association added

3-yr-old girl run over by container truck in Madanayakanahalli

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a heart-wrenching incident on Saturday morning, a three-year-old girl was killed on the spot after being run over by a speeding container truck at Hanumanthegowdanapalya village in Madanayakanahalli.

The deceased has been identified as Nishchitha L N Gowda, daughter of Lakshminarayana and Lavanya.

The incident occurred between 11.15 am and 11.30 am while the toddler was walking to a nearby temple with her mother, Lavanya, and her 11-month-old brother Diganth.

According to the police, the mother was carrying the infant in her arms while holding Nishchitha's hand as they walked along the left side of the road toward the Muneshwara temple near their residence.The police stated that a container truck (bearing registration number MH-04 HY-2203), reportedly driven in a rash and negligent manner, struck the child from behind. The impact caused the toddler to fall, and the heavy vehicle's wheels ran over her head, resulting in instant death due to severe cranial injuries.

The driver of the vehicle allegedly failed to notice the pedestrians despite them walking on the edge of the road. Following the accident, the Madanayakanahalli police have registered a case against the truck driver under sections 281 (Rash driving or riding on a public way) and 106(1) causing death by negligence, of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Cheated of Rs 4.8 lakh, girl lodges complaint against Instagram friend

MANJUNATH SHETTAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

A 19-year-old student has filed a complaint at the Electronic City police station accusing a 22-year-old man of blackmail and cheating. She has further accused the man of duping her of gold jewellery worth Rs 4.8 lakh and Rs 10,000 in cash.

A senior police officer said that the accused, Pawan Kumar, (23), told the girl, whom he befriended on Instagram, that he was an employee in a private company. Later, met her in person and both stayed in touch after exchanging phone numbers. In December 2024, he allegedly invited her to a hotel on Kanakapura Road, where they spent time together.

The accused later claimed that hotel staff had recorded their private moments on closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, and used this as a pretext to blackmail her. He allegedly threatened to make the footage viral unless she paid money to "settle" the matter. He also reportedly warned her of committing suicide if the video was ever leaked, for which the girl would be held responsible.

Fearing the threats, the victim initially transferred money in January 2025. In February 2025, she allegedly handed over her mother's gold necklace worth Rs 2.2 lakh.

The accused, however, persisted with his demands for more money, contacting the girl using different phone numbers. On March 2, 2026, he received a gold chain worth Rs 2.5 lakh from the girl in JP Nagar, promising to return the jewels he had taken from her earlier. However, he later blocked the girl's number.

However, the girl's parents took note of the missing jewels and questioned their daughter. She recounted her ordeal with Pavan, after which she decided to approach the police. Police have registered a case, and are on the lookout for Pavan, who is currently absconding.

Lamborghini stunt: FIR registered against luxury car owner

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Cubbon Park Traffic Police have registered a suo motu FIR against the owner of a white Lamborghini after a video of the luxury vehicle performing dangerous drifting manoeuvres at Anil Kumble Circle went viral on social media.

The incident, which reportedly took place between 2 am and 3 am on Saturday, saw the high-end sports car screeching across the junction. Onlookers captured the act on their mobile phones, showing the vehicle performing multiple drifts and high-speed turns, significantly endangering public safety.

According to police, the driver performed stunts, circling the junction twice before speeding away toward the Cubbon Park Police Station stretch. Police noted that the driver and occupants were seen engaging in hooliganism, with some even standing out of the sunroof and screaming. "Operating vehicles in a reckless manner on public roads is a non-negotiable violation of the law," a senior traffic police officer stated. "An FIR has been registered under sections pertaining to rash and negligent driving and endangering human life."

The police have approached the Regional Transport Office (RTO) to extract the full details of the vehicle's owner. While the registration number is confirmed, investigators are currently verifying insurance documents and the identity of the person behind the wheel at the time of the incident.

The Cubbon Park Traffic Police confirmed that the case was registered based on digital evidence and a report from the personnel stationed in the area for night vigil. The accused and related details is yet to be ascertained. Investigations are on.

MEMU train service between Banaswadi & Tumakuru today

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a bid to clear the extra rush of passengers, South Western Railway will operate MEMU Special train service between Banaswadi and Tumakuru, for one trip in each direction on March 22.

Train No 06589 Banaswadi-Tumakuru MEMU Special will leave Banaswadi at 3.30 pm on March 22 and reach Tumakuru at 5.15 pm. In the return direction, Train No 06590 Tumakuru- Banaswadi MEMU Special will leave Tumakuru at 5.45 pm on March 22 and reach Banaswadi at 7.40 pm.

En route, the train has stoppages at Hebbal, Chikbanavar, Gollahalli, Dodbele, Nidavanda, Hirehalli and Kyatsandra stations in both directions.

Waste-to-gas plants solution to gas shortage, garbage woes, says minister

BENGALURU, PTI: Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy on Saturday pitched for decentralised waste-to-gas plants as a viable solution to both potential cooking gas shortages amid West Asia tensions and Bengaluru's mounting garbage problem.

Ramalinga Reddy

Citing a functioning model in Koramangala, Reddy said converting wet waste into biogas could reduce dependence on conventional LPG supplies while simultaneously tackling urban waste management challenges.

Explaining the waste-to-energy initiative, he told reporters that in 2018, a company called Carbon Masters invested about Rs 4 crore to start a project that collects wet waste from households and converts it into gas.

"Initially, the processing capacity was eight tonnes of garbage per day. Today, we have inaugurated an additional five tonnes, taking the total capacity to 13 tonnes of wet waste being processed daily to produce gas. This gas is then sold commercially to nearby users," the minister said.

He pointed out the scale of the city's waste problem and the opportunity it presents. "In Bengaluru, at least 2,500 to 3,000 tonnes of wet waste is generated every day. Most of it is dumped in yards along with dry waste, which leads to several problems -- foul smell, mosquito breeding, and contamination of water sources. If we properly utilise wet waste like this, about half of the city's waste can be managed efficiently," he said.

Responding to a question on scaling the model, Reddy said it could significantly reduce landfill dependency. In the next six months to a year, nearly 1,500 tonnes of wet waste will be prevented from going into dumping yards.

If this is fully implemented across Bengaluru, about 2,000 to 2,500 tonnes of wet waste can be converted into gas locally, eliminating the need for dumping, he said.

The minister told reporters that similar projects are already underway in other parts of the city.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Lecture: 'Dalit consciousness in Kannada literature'; Hajira Khanam, L N Mukundraj, and others participate; Organised by Dalit Sahitya Parishat, Bengaluru district committee; Akkamahadevi Auditorium, Kannada Sahitya Parishat, Chamarajpet; 10 am

Ugadi celebrations: Organised by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan; B Krishna Kumar, Anur Anantha Krishna Sharma and others to take part; Bharatiya Vidya Balan, Race Course Road; 10.30 am

Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Karnataka Mountaineering Association: Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, Naveen Raj Singh and others to participate; Yavanika, Nrupathunga Road; 1 pm

Invites to be published in this column should be sent to: **incitytoday@deccanherald.co.in.** Please note that hard copies will not be accepted

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Generally cloudy sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	32.6°C
Minimum	21.5°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	40%
Sunset (Mar 22)	6:31 pm
Sunrise (Mar 23)	6:23 am
Moonrise	5:49 am
Moonset	8:45 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

ZODIAC
ANNUAL SALE

Limited Period Offer

WhatsApp "SALE" to 8454936004 for participating stores
This allows us to send you our promotions and offers regularly

PM SHRI
ಪಿಎಂ ಶ್ರೀ ಕೇಂದ್ರೀಯ ವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ ಎ. ಎಸ್. ಸಿ. ಕೇಂದ್ರ (ದಕ್ಷಿಣ) ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು
पीएम श्री केन्द्रीय विद्यालय ए. एस. सी. सेंटर (दक्षिण), बेंगलुरु
PM SHRI KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA A.S.C. CENTRE (SOUTH), BENGALURU
No. 1, VICTORIA ROAD, BENGALURU 560047
Email: kvascbgr@gmail.com Website: https://ascbangalore.kvs.ac.in/ Phone No.: 080-25302862

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW

S. No	Posts	Interview Date
1	• PGT: Chemistry, Biology, Hindi, Physics, Economics, Geography, Political Science • TGT: Hindi and Social Science, Sanskrit • MISCELLANEOUS: Vocational Instructor, Art and Craft Coach, Music/Dance Coach, Yoga Coach, Kannada Teacher, Counsellor, Special Educator, Nurse • PRT and Balvatika	28/03/2026 (SATURDAY) Reporting Time: 8:30-10:30 AM

• Eligibility for PRT: D.El.Ed.and CTET (Paper 1) and Balvatika : Diploma in Nursery Teacher Education / Pre-school Education/ Early Childhood Education Programme (D.E.C.Ed) of duration of not less than two years or B.Ed(Nursery) from NCTE recognized institution.
• Kindly visit the Samvida Sathi portal for registration (https://samvida-sathi.kvs.gov.in)
• Interviews are subjected to candidates fulfilling the Eligibility criteria and Document Verifications
Note: For Qualifications and other details kindly visit the website https //:ascbangalore.kvs.ac.in
Sd/- PRINCIPAL

Man survives throat-slitting attack; swift police action saves life

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 38-year-old employee of a granite company narrowly escaped death after an unidentified assailant slit his throat in the wee hours in Kamakshipalya on Friday, highlighting the brutality of the attack and the effectiveness of Namma 112.

The incident occurred at 6 am near a petrol bunk in Vinayaka Nagar when the victim, identified as Narayana, was returning from his night-shift, when he was suddenly intercepted and attacked by an unidentified person.

According to preliminary reports, the assailant used a knife to slit Narayana's throat before fleeing the spot. Severely injured, he collapsed on the road, bleeding profusely. Residents, who noticed the grievously injured Narayana, immediately alerted the emergency helpline Namma 112.

The alert was received at the control room at around 7.15 am and promptly relayed to the Hoysala patrol unit and personnel of Kamakshipalya police station. ASI Kemparaju and police constable Harish Kumar rushed to the spot within eight minutes, officials said.

The victim was shifted to a nursing home in Sunkadakatte for emergency medical care. Doctors attending to him later indicated that the timely intervention and rapid transportation to the hospital played a crucial role in saving his life.

Speaking to *DH*, a senior police officer said that Narayana is currently under treatment and his condition is stable.

Efforts are on to identify and trace the accused, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the motive behind the attack.

"A case of attempt to murder has been registered, and we are probing the case from all possible angles, including an attempt to rob or an old rivalry at his workplace. Once he recovers, we will ascertain the exact cause of the attack. Meanwhile, a special team obtained CCTV footage from the locality to trace the accused, and we have some clues", the police officer added.

INTERVIEW

'With good govt-Oppn ties, Karnataka fares better in House proceedings'

'If ministers come to House early, things will improve'

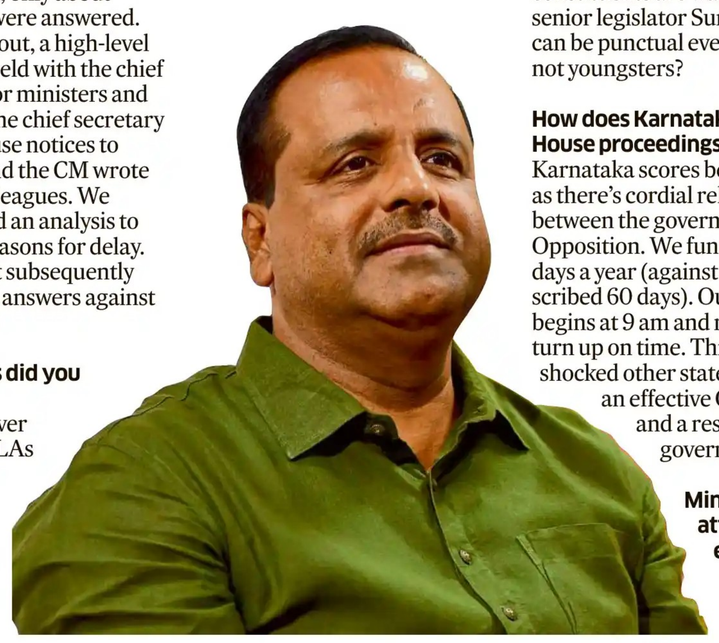
On March 16, Speaker **U T Khader** walked out of the Assembly in an unprecedented manner of protest by a presiding officer against the government's failure to provide answers to questions by legislators. After becoming Speaker, the 5-time Mangalore MLA got AI cameras installed to track legislators' attendance. To incentivise attendance, he introduced complimentary breakfast and recliner chairs. He proposed linking session attendance with constituency grants. *DH*'s **Prathima Nandakumar** sat down with Khader to discuss his reforms agenda. Excerpts:

A Speaker walking out was unprecedented. What made you do it?
The Assembly isn't for ministers; it's for MLAs. Ministers have Cabinet where they can discuss. They can get work done as officers will listen to them. But MLAs are people's voice. There will be issues in their constituencies and policy matters that need discussion. So, the House meets once every 3 months. The government is bound to give answers. However, for many days, I observed the answers to unstarred questions had almost stopped. I warned departments not to take my softness for weakness. Yet they didn't take it seriously. I had to make a clear decision. I could overlook it or uphold dignity of my chair and do justice to MLAs. I chose the latter.

Was the issue with Question Hour?
We get both starred (that get answered in the House) and unstarred questions (that get written replies) from members. Only 15 questions are starred. However, unstarred questions are equally important and carry same sanctity. The answers are laid before the House as it is a commitment by the government. If an answer is not given, MLAs can approach the Assurance committee. On March 16, the home minister tabled only 84 answers against 230 unstarred questions. The previous week, only about 50 questions were answered. After the walkout, a high-level meeting was held with the chief minister, senior ministers and Opposition. The chief secretary gave show-cause notices to secretaries, and the CM wrote to Cabinet colleagues. We also conducted an analysis to understand reasons for delay. I'm happy that subsequently there were 171 answers against 191 questions.

What changes did you make?
When I took over as Speaker, MLAs complained that answers weren't provided even up to a year. I constituted a House committee to address the issue of delayed answers and summon officers concerned. We take up questions from 5 departments a day and track performance daily. Officers should be proactive, prepare answers and get minister's signature before printing copies. Some answers might need more time. Officers should inform the MLA and commit to when the answer will be furnished.

> My early experience as an MLA, when I sat through House proceedings and interacted with senior members, helped me. No learning goes waste.
>
> **U T Khader**
> Speaker



Many ministers continue to skip Assembly session. What do you have to say on this?
It's the primary duty of ministers to protect sanctity of the House.

Has the new attendance system and reading out names of on-time MLAs helped?
The attendance has improved and participation is getting better. I feel if ministers come early, things will really improve. It's important to recognise and honour punctuality. The constituents are watching. If senior legislator Suresh Kumar can be punctual every day, why not youngsters?

How does Karnataka fare in House proceedings?
Karnataka scores better as there's cordial relations between the government and Opposition. We function 55 days a year (against the prescribed 60 days). Our session begins at 9 am and members turn up on time. This has shocked other states. We have an effective Opposition and a responsive government.

Ministers attend public events or travel to Delhi during session. Your comments.
The business advisory committee has discussed this and asked ministers to treat Assembly as first priority.

Our Assembly is not yet paperless. Why is it so?
Our legislative material is digital. We sent two proposals - National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) to digitise state legislatures with 60% central assistance, and our own application, to the state government. The government has approved NeVA. In 3 months, we'll be fully digital. Delay was because Karnataka is bicameral and NeVA is designed for unicameral legislatures.

How has your transition been from a full-time politician to Speaker?
My early experience as an MLA, when I sat through House proceedings and interacted with senior members, helped me. No learning goes waste.

Your advice to first-time legislators.
It's ironic. We struggle to become MLA, so that we can enter the Assembly. But after winning, we struggle to attend the session. Develop patience and sincerity. Unless you're a good listener, you can't be a good leader. Politics is not mathematics, but chemistry. Take everyone along, even in your constituency, as peace precedes development.

HC upholds BDA land acquisition at Gubbalala village

Says Banashankari VI Stage extn has been substantially implemented & sites allotted

BENGALURU, DHNS

The High Court of Karnataka has upheld the acquisition of certain lands at Gubbalala village in Uttarahalli hobli, Bengaluru South taluk, for the formation of "Further Extension of Banashankari VI Stage by linking existing VI Stage Layout through Kanakapura-Bangalore Main Road."

A division bench comprising Justices D K Singh and T M Nadaf passed the order allowing the writ appeal filed by the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) observing that the scheme has been substantially implemented and sites allotted.

The landowners had filed the petitions before the single bench challenging the November 7, 2002, preliminary notification and September 9, 2003, final notification under the Bangalore Development Authority Act. The petitioners had alternatively sought directions to compensate them as per 40:60 scheme in the event of acquisition was completed in all respects. The single judge bench had quashed the preliminary and final notifications holding that the possession of the lands of the petitioners was not taken in accordance with law.

Challenging this order, the BDA contended that the land acquisition proceedings were concluded after the issuance of the preliminary and final notifications for formation of the layout and that the possession of the lands was taken in January 2004. It was further submitted that sites had been formed and allotted to the allottees.

The division bench noted that as many as 53 sites have been allotted in respect of the lands of the petitioners. "The conveyance deeds in favour of the allottees have been registered by the BDA. The Google Maps would also show that the allottees have put up construction of houses and the roads have been formed. Therefore, we are of the considered view that the scheme has been substantially implemented and there is no question of applicability of either the provisions of Section 27 of the BDA Act or the provisions of Section 24(2) of the Right to Fair Compensation Act. The award amount has been deposited in the Treasury and that is not in dispute," the division bench said, while setting aside the order of the single bench.

'Harassment': Social welfare asst director ends life in office

PAVAGADA (TUMAKURU DISTRICT), DHNS: A 60-year-old assistant director with Social Welfare department, scheduled to retire by the end of this month, ended his life by hanging himself at his office on Friday night.

The deceased has been identified as Mallikarjunaiah, who hailed from Gundarlahalli in Pavagada taluk. He was to retire from service on March 31.

Police complaint
Mallikarjunaiah had lodged a complaint with deputy superintendent of police at Madhugiri and also at Pavagada police station on Friday morning, accusing Krishnappa, joint director of the department of harassing him.

In a purported death note and a video clip, Mallikarjunaiah said that he took the decision (to end his life) unable to bear harassment by Krishnappa.

He has stated that his family members need not seek any revenge and that the law will punish Krishnappa.

The Pavagada town police have registered a case based on the complaint lodged by Jayalakshmi, the wife of the deceased.

She alleged that Krishnappa was demanding money from her husband over the phone.

The last rites were conducted in Kanivehalli of Pavagada taluk on Saturday.

EID PRAYERS

Muslims offer mass prayers on the occasion of Ramzan at the idgah maidan at Chamarajapet in Bengaluru on Saturday. (Right) Children exchange greetings on the occasion. DH PHOTOS/B K JANARDHAN & M S MANJUNATH

HC: Consider guidance value while valuing property for lending

AMBARISH B
BENGALURU, DHNS

The guidance value determined by the sub-registrar ought to be taken into consideration while valuing the property for lending purposes, the high court observed in a recent judgement.

Justice Suraj Govindaraj said this while allowing the petition filed by a woman who intended to start her own business.

The petitioner Parwati, of Kannur in Vijayapura district, had sought financial assistance from Karnataka State Financial Corporation (KSFC) and offered mortgaging of around 10 acres of land.

The petitioner claimed the guidance value of the property is around Rs 4.73 crore, at the rate of Rs 900 per square metre for residential purposes and Rs 1,200 per square metre for commercial purposes.

However, the corporation claimed that as per its methodology, the valuation is only Rs 40.8 lakh and that the loan will be given on that determination.

Challenging this response, the petitioner contended that if the sub-registrar, an officer entrusted with the responsibility of determining market value, has already certified the value of the property at a particular rate, the same value ought to be accepted by other state instrumentalities. It is submitted that there cannot be multiple or conflicting valuations for same property depending on the authority concerned.

On the other hand, KSFC argued that the valuation adopted by it is strictly in accordance with KSFC Lending Policy, 2020, which governs the way secured assets are to be valued for purposes of sanctioning loans.

The valuation determined by the sub-registrar is primarily for the purpose of registration of documents and collection of stamp duty, and such guideline value cannot be automatically adopted for the purpose of lending decisions by financial institutions, it was further submitted.

The court said the guidance value determined by the sub-registrar is not confined to registration matters alone.

"The same value is also taken into consideration in various other statutory contexts. For instance, under Sec 50C of Income Tax Act, 1961, the value adopted by the stamp valuation authority is treated as deemed sale consideration for purpose of computation of capital gains," the court said.

It said that when two different authorities of the state adopt mutually inconsistent valuation standards for the same property, the citizen is left to bear the burden of such inconsistency.

"While KSFC may retain the discretion to undertake appropriate due diligence and risk assessment in determining the quantum of loan to be sanctioned, such determination cannot proceed on a valuation methodology that is wholly inconsistent with the statutory guidance value recognised by the state itself," Justice Suraj Govindaraj said.

'Arbitration no mere tool to unclog courts'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday called for a radical shift in India's legal psyche, urging the legal fraternity to stop treating arbitration as a mere tool to unclog courts and instead embrace it as a specialised, standalone system of commercial justice.

Inaugurating the Ramaiah International Moot and ADR Conference 2026 at Ramaiah College of Law, he said while tethering arbitration to "court backlogs" was a persuasive argument in 1990s, that justification has outlived its utility.

"Defining arbitration only by how many cases it removes from courts is like defining a hospital only by how many patients it keeps out of the emergency room," Justice Surya Kant said. "It highlights a side effect, but misses the core purpose."

The CJI expressed concern over the concentration of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) expertise in a few metropolitan hubs. He advocated for "district-level arbitration," noting that while MSMEs and local supply chains across India's taluks face complex disputes, meaningful access to arbitration remains a "metropolis-only" luxury.

"Every state has commercial towns. We need to bring arbitration to their doorstep by involving local bar associations and chambers of commerce," he said.

Addressing the procedural habits creeping into ADR, he cautioned against the litigation-ization of arbitration. He lamented the rise of lengthy submissions, endless oral arguments and frequent adjournments, traits typically associated with courtrooms, within supposedly flexible arbitration proceedings.

"India must develop its own 'identity' in arbitration, one that prioritises concise reasoning over oral endurance and views time limits as commitments, not suggestions," he said.

Secretary of Ramaiah College of Law (RCL) M R Anandaram felicitates Chief Justice of India Surya Kant at the inauguration of the international arbitration moot competition organised by the college in Bengaluru on Saturday. Supreme Court judges Justice B V Nagarathna, Justice N Kotiswar Singh, former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka Justice Mohan Peiris, Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines Satish Chandra Dubey, Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka Justice Vibhu Bakhru and RCL principal Prof Uma Mahesh S are seen. DH PHOTO/B K JANARDHAN

Justice Surya Kant assured that the judiciary would do its part by resisting the temptation to second-guess arbitral awards. But, he challenged the ADR community to build a system worthy of that restraint by focusing on the quality and training of arbitrators.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by legal luminaries, including Supreme Court judges - Justices B V Nagarathna and N Kotiswar Singh.

Also present were Justice Vibhu Bakhru of the High Court, chairman of the Bar Council of India Manan Kumar Mishra and former Chief Justice of Sri Lanka Mohan Peiris.

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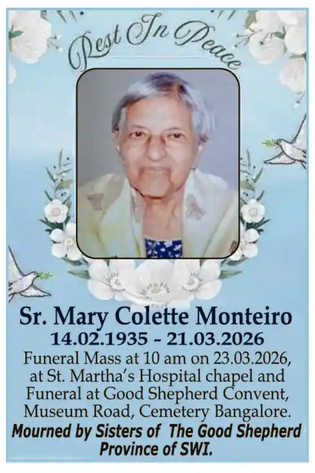

Sr. Mary Colette Monteiro
14.02.1935 - 21.03.2026
Funeral Mass at 10 am on 23.03.2026, at St. Martha's Hospital chapel and Funeral at Good Shepherd Convent, Museum Road, Cemetery Bangalore.
Mourned by Sisters of The Good Shepherd Province of SWI.

OBITUARY

Smt. Manjula W Paul
Age-88
DOB: 02-03-1938 DOD: 21-03-2026
Funeral on 22-03-2026 at 4:00 PM.
Indian Christian Cemetary
Hosur Road, Bangalore Gate No.2
Deeply Mourned by
Family Members
9900699662 / 9845223285
9986329080

TIMELY AID

This philanthropist's heart is where hungry stomachs are

ARUNKUMAR HURALIMATH
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Aditya Raj Dandeli, a city-based social activist and businessman, has been offering free food to needy people for the last 5 days, even as many hotels have remained closed amid the gas crisis, in Hubballi.

Every day 1,000 to 1,500 people, including college students, women and labourers are fed lunch and dinner by him at his under-construction building on Shirur Park Road.

More than 600 people have their lunch and over 400 people their dinner here.

While lunch includes rice, sambar and curry, dinner consists of palak rice, bisibele bath, pulao and other rice items. People are happy with the service as several small hotels have been closed.

Prajwal, a student from Adaragunchi village, said he used to eat idli, rice or other items in small hotels at nominal prices at noon.

"Since they are closed now, paying more at big hotels is not affordable for me. The free meals here has helped me in the afternoons over the last 2 days," the student said.

Dandeli said there were several students, labourers and outsiders in Vidyanagar area for various reasons. With the disruption in LPG supply, he came to know that many people were finding it difficult to get food at affordable rates. Hence, he thought of providing free meals to the needy. "God has given me the wherewithal to serve a few people. So, I thought of this endeavour. We are serving lunch from 1 pm to 4 pm and dinner between 8 pm and 10 pm," he said.

The basement of the under-construction building has been used as a kitchen and the ground floor as dining hall.

Manoj of Sri Sai Caters, who has been assigned the responsibility of preparing the food, said he was assisted by five staff members, including two women, in the kitchen to cook food twice a day on firewood.

Congress to field Umesh Meti for Bagalkot Assembly bypoll

Party holds back-to-back meetings on D'gere South pick

BENGALURU, DHNS

The ruling Congress is set to field Umesh Meti, son of late H Y Meti for bypoll to Bagalkot constituency. However, the party is yet to decide on a candidate for Davangere South.

Umesh emerged as the choice with warring family members arriving at a consensus after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's intervention.

In Davangere South, the Shamanur family was adamant to retain the seat within the family after the demise of veteran leader Shamanur Shivashankarappa, while the minority leaders led by Housing minister Zameer Ahmed Khan too demanded the ticket citing a significant Muslim population.

Samarth Shamanur, 27-year-old grandson of Shamanur Shivashankarappa filed his nomination on Friday, even before the party officially announced its candidate. The move did not go well with the minority leaders. Some leaders also pointed out that Shivashankarappa had earlier indicated that the seat would go to a Muslim candidate after his tenure.

Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar downplayed Samarth's early nomination, stating that Horticulture Minister S S Mallikarjun (Samarth's father) had clarified it was filed only because it happened to be an "auspicious" day and would be withdrawn if the party decided otherwise.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his deputy D K Shivakumar, AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, ministers and other leaders hold a consultation meeting to finalise candidate for the bypoll to Davangere South Assembly constituency, in Bengaluru on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the demand for greater political representation gained traction among the minority community, with leaders arguing that Davangere South with 85,000 Muslim voters remains one of the few constituencies where their claim is strong. They, however, expressed hope that the issue would be resolved amicably to avoid a split in votes.

AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala held back-to-back meetings over the past two days, including with minority leaders, and finally managed to convince them to back out.

"We wanted to discuss in detail as even a single party worker's opinion matters. We will declare the candidates tonight or tomorrow morning," he told reporters.

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TEER is redefining treatment for severe mitral valve leakage

Many patients - particularly those above 60 - often ignore symptoms such as fatigue, breathlessness or swelling, assuming they are a natural part of ageing. However, these signs may indicate severe mitral regurgitation, a condition where the heart's mitral valve fails to close properly, allowing blood to leak backwards toward the lungs. Over time, this increases strain on the heart and can lead to worsening breathlessness, reduced stamina and eventually heart failure.

Transcatheter Edge-to-Edge Repair (TEER) has emerged as a minimally-invasive treatment option for such patients, particularly those considered high-risk for open-heart surgery. The procedure involves inserting a thin catheter through a blood vessel in the groin and guiding it to the heart using advanced imaging. A small clip is then placed on the mitral valve to help it close more effectively, reducing backward blood flow and improving circulation.

Dr Naveen Chandra Shetty, Senior Interventional Cardiologist, Aster Hospital, Whitefield, Bengaluru, explains, "As an interventional cardiologist, I have witnessed the transformative effect of TEER on patients previously considered inoperable. By guiding a catheter through the groin and placing a small clip on the mitral valve, we can reduce leakage and relieve symptoms significantly without the need for major surgery. Many patients notice improvement in breathlessness and energy levels soon after the procedure".

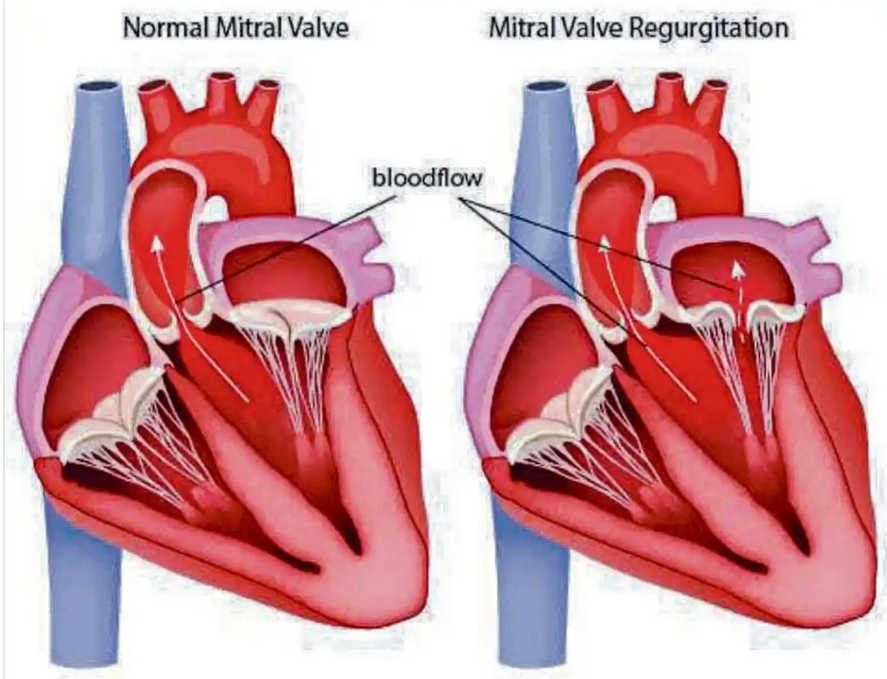
The minimally-invasive approach also means quicker recovery. The procedure typically takes a few hours, requires only a small puncture in the groin, and most patients are discharged within three to five days.

Dr Naveen Chandra Shetty
Senior Interventional Cardiologist, Aster Hospital, Whitefield, Bengaluru.

Dr Chirag D
Interventional Cardiologist, Aster Hospital, Whitefield, Bengaluru.

Highlighting the broader impact of the therapy, Dr Chirag D, Interventional Cardiologist, Aster Hospital, Whitefield, Bengaluru, says, "Minimally-invasive therapies like TEER have transformed the management of severe mitral regurgitation. Patients who were once denied surgery due to age or other medical conditions now have a safe and effective treatment option. In many cases, we see rapid symptom relief and a significant improvement in quality of life.

Apart from symptom relief, TEER can reduce hospitalisations related to heart failure and help patients regain independence in daily life. With encouraging long-term outcomes and growing clinical adoption, TEER is redefining how severe mitral valve disease is treated - offering renewed hope, better heart function and improved quality of life for patients who once had very limited options.



Disclaimer: The views, suggestions, opinions expressed in the article are the sole responsibility of the brand concerned. This should not be considered a substitute for medical advice. Please consult your treating physician for more details.

Prez Murmu to visit Siddaganga Mutt on April 1

TUMAKURU, DHNS: President Droupadi Murmu will grace the 119th birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Shivakumara Swami at the Siddaganga Mutt in Tumakuru city on April 1.

Draupadi Murmu

Participating in a preliminary meeting convened to discuss preparations for the occasion, Union Minister of State for Railways V Somanna confirmed the President's participation in the event. "The President is scheduled to arrive in Bengaluru on March 31, and will stay at the Lok Bhavan that day. On April 1, she will take a helicopter to Tumakuru, and come to Siddaganga Mutt, where she will offer her respects to Shivakumar Swami, interact with the children, and subsequently take her place on the dais for the ceremony," said Somanna.

The Union Minister pointed out that April 1, Shivakumar Swami's birth anniversary, had already been declared 'Dasoha Day', although a gazette notification formalising the announcement was yet to be issued by the state government. "I will write to the Chief Minister asking him to issue the gazette notification on this before April 1," said Somanna.

West Asia crisis proves a millstone around rice mill owners' necks

KOPPAL, DHNS

Owners of rice mills here are a worried lot as the West Asia conflict intensifies.

Usually, rice yield from December-end and January in the region is exported o various countries.

Loads of the produce meant for exports are waiting to be picked up at different ports, while in some cases, lorries have returned to the godowns from the ports with consignments that could not set off to their destinations, especially in the Gulf region.

Another challenge stares owners of the rice mills in the face. With tonnes of export quality rice not moving out of the granaries owing to the war, they are now worried about the lack of space to store the fresh yield from the fields expected in a month.

Top quality sona masuri rice is grown in the Tungabhadra basin districts of Koppal, Vijayanagar, Ballari and Raichur and commands huge demand overseas.

Unsold rice stocks pile up at a godown in Koppal. With exports halted due to the West Asia conflict, rice mill owners fear huge losses this season.

Rice mill owners have already paid farmers for the paddy output bought from them. With stocks meant for markets abroad stuck in the godowns, they fear huge losses.

The state is home to 4,000 rice mills and owners have to pay salaries to workers there, besides paying the power bills.

The situation is no different in Gangavathi taluk of the district, considered the rice bowl of the state.

Paddy sowing was below par in January as less water was available for irrigation owing to reduced storage in the Tungabhadra dam, whose crest gates are being replaced.

So, even the comparatively low rice yield this season has not been exhausted, with exports halted, say rice mill owners.

The crisis has had a spillover effect, with prices of rice plummeting. One quintal of old sona masuri rice is selling at Rs 5,400 to Rs 5,600. The prices of new rice are Rs 200 less than old rice, Sanjay, a trader in Koppal, told *DH*.

25 injured in bee attack during Eid prayers

DAVANGERE, DHNS: Over 25 people belonging to Muslim community sustained bite injuries when a swarm of honey bees attacked them during the mass prayers held as part of Eid ul Fitr on the Eidgah ground at Aanagodu village in the taluk, on Saturday.

Eleven people suffered serious injuries and are undergoing treatment at Chigateri District General Hospital in the city. Mayakonda MLA K S Basavanthappa visited the hospital and inquired about the well-being of the injured.

According to District General Hospital Medical Superintendent M B Nagendrappa, 10 people, including three children, admitted to the district hospital are recovering. Only one person, who is suffering from a heart-related disease, is being treated in the intensive care unit (ICU).

Take steps for success of school admission campaign: Minister to DCs, ZP CEOs

BENGALURU, DHNS: School Education and Literacy Minister Madhu Bangarappa has written to deputy commissioners (DCs) of all districts and chief executive officers (CEOs) of Zilla Panchayats (ZPs), requesting them to take necessary measures for the success of the admission campaign launched at government schools.

In the letter, the minister said, "Our government has initiated various measures to strengthen the government schools. In recent days, parents are getting positive opinions on the government schools after attending the state-level parent-teacher meetings and realising the facilities and quality education available at government schools."

Efforts appreciated

Appreciating the efforts by the deputy commissioners and chief executive officers of Zilla Panchayats in implementing the admission campaign, the minister further requested them to follow the particular guidelines issued.

In the letter to these district-level officials, he urged them to ensure that no single child is left out of the school.

"Visit every household in the rural areas in coordination with the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) and convince the parents to admit their children to the government schools," the minister vmentioned in the letter.

"Create WhatsApp groups of alumni of the schools with the help of SDMCs and take their support to increase admissions," he advised them.

Russian oil tanker reaches New Mangalore Port

MANGALURU, DHNS: Russian oil tanker, Aqua Titan, arrived at New Mangalore Port carrying crude oil on Saturday night after being chartered by MRPL. The operations to unload are to begin in the early hours of Sunday.

Dakshina Kannada MP Brijesh Chowta, in a social media post, said the arrival indicated the port's growing significance.

The vessel, with Urals crude that it loaded from a Baltic Sea port in late Jan, had set sail for Rizhao port, China. It changed course in Southeast Asia and headed to New Mangalore port.

Emotion-driven decision proved fatal for trainee vet at Tyavarekoppa zoo

NRUPATHUNGA S K
SHIVAMOGGA, DHNS

'Strong emotions' towards 15-year-old pregnant hippopotamus 'Hamsini', and the 'impulsive decision' to treat her claimed the life of trainee veterinary officer Sameeksha Reddy, 27, at the Tyavarekoppa zoo near here.

A senior official told *DH* that Sameeksha went inside the enclosure with the driver in good faith and genuine care for the animal, which had lost her two calves after birth in the past. She checked the hippo's temperature through a thermal imaging camera. But Hamsini bit the doctor in the stomach with her jaw, when Sameeksha fell off the ladder while returning from the enclosure.

Recalling the incident, the official said her three friends and night watcher too had gone to the zoo on that fateful day. But Sameeksha and the driver went inside the enclosure with the help of a ladder. He admitted that she should have entered the enclosure with a senior veterinarian or during day time.

He said Sameeksha examined Hamsini outside the enclosure through her mobile phone and thermal imaging camera on the night of March 18, even though securityman Peter told her that she had not obtained permission from senior officials for it.

The driver, who accompanied her, called the animal keeper on the night of March 19 when she expressed her desire to enter the enclosure. But the animal keeper did not respond to the call.

Sameeksha reportedly entered the enclosure at night. Hamsini had stopped taking food and her movement was sluggish.

The officer said that the deputy range forest officer should have accompanied the trainee veterinary officer. But the zoo faces staff shortage. Of the sanctioned three posts, only two deputy range forest officers are serving in the zoo and they discharge their duties during day time.

Sources in the zoo said veterinary officer Murali Manohar had resigned some months ago. But the zoo authorities had asked him to continue till April as there was no replacement. Meanwhile, two young veterinary graduates Meryn and Sameeksha Reddy from Bengaluru were appointed trainee veterinary officers.

Besides the police team which will investigate the incident, a team of forest department led by Chief Conservator of Forests Hanumantappa will probe the tragedy.

According to experts, hippopotamus becomes active at night and something might have riled Hamsini.

Hippopotamus Hamsini that bit trainee veterinary officer Dr Sameeksha Reddy (inset) at Tyavarekoppa zoo near Shivamogga.

Bannerghatta hippo to be named after Sameeksha

Zoo Authority of Karnataka Chairman K Rangaswamy visited the Tyavarekoppa zoo on Saturday and told that female hippopotamus at Bannerghatta National Park would be named after Sameeksha.

He inspected the enclosure of the hippopotamus Hamsini at Tyavarekoppa that bit Sameeksha and held talks with the officials.

Speaking on the occasion, he said the department would probe the incident thoroughly.

BJP to back Gowda's re-election to RS with future polls in mind?

Gowda, from Jacket Page 2

Sources from the JD(S) informed that discussions are on with the BJP high command at New Delhi. "One round of discussions has already been held with a few of the national leaders and they are also obliged to re-elect Deve Gowda considering his experience," a JD(S) leader stated.

The term of the four Rajya Sabha members from Karnataka will end on June 25. Each candidate needs 45 to 46 votes to win and currently, in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, Congress has 136 seats, BJP 63 and JD(S) 18. Apart from these, Sarvodaya Paksha has one member and there are three expelled BJP members while two seats are vacant. For a candidate to win directly he/she needs around 45 to 46 votes and as per this calculation, the governing Congress can easily win three seats. BJP and JD(S) have only one seat left for them. The BJP and JD(S) alliance together has 81 votes and they will fall short of nine votes for the second seat.

Cross voting is difficult in this election as members have to show their ballot paper to the party's election agent.

If both Kharge and Gowda are re-elected from Karnataka to the Rajya Sabha, then two senior and experienced leaders will be the voices of the state. Kharge is 83 years old and Gowda is 93.

Kumaraswamy meets Amit Shah

▶ **NEW DELHI, DHNS:** Union Steel Minister and JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy and his son JD(S) youth wing president Nikhil Kumaraswamy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi on Saturday. Kumaraswamy said the meeting was to extend Ugadi greetings.

CORRIGENDUM -2 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO.: CON/2026/JAN/06 DATED. 31-01-2026

Corrigendum-2 for Tender Notice No. CON/2026/JAN/06, dated: 31-01-2026 against **Tender No. CE/CON/FT/EPC/2026/03** has been published. For details please visit in website **www.ireps.gov.in**.

Chief Engineer/Con/LMG
Project/Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Construction Organization
Serving Customers With A Smile

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
Indian Railways Institute of Signal Engineering and Telecommunications, Secunderabad
PUB/2171/26

Tender Notice No.CoE-IRISET-02-26 Dated: 25.02.2026

Centre of Excellence (CoE)/IRISET working under Ministry of Railways seeks response from Prospective associate(s), for
Tender Notice no. COE-IRISET-02-26, Dt: 25.02.2026: "Provision of Kavach FAT setup at IRISET".
Interested parties are advised to see & keep watching all the updates on the following websites in connection with aforesaid Tender notice.
Websites: https://iriset.railnet.gov.in, https://iriset.indianrailways.gov.in and https://www.ireps.gov.in
A2743 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/TD/CoE/IRISET

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Salem Division
Office of the Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer, Electric Loco Shed, Erode
E-Tender Notice
Online tender is invited for the following work:

Tender No	Description of Work
SA_A_RS_ED_OT_25_26_22, Dated: 20-03-2026	Works contract for Repair / reconditioning of Auxiliary Motors of Three Phase electric locomotives available at Electric Loco Shed, Southern Railway, Salern Division, Erode.
SA_A_RS_ED_OT_25_26_24, Dated: 20-03-2026	Repairing and Maintenance of Roof mounted Cab AC units for Minor Inspection and Major Schedule available in Three Phase electric locomotives of Electric Loco Shed, Southern Railway, Salem Division, Erode.

All details regarding the tender are available at https://www.ireps.gov.in
DEE/RS/ED
For Sr.DEE/RS/ED

ICAR - National Institute of Animal Nutrition and Physiology
Adugodi, Bengaluru-560 030
Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Government of India
WALK-IN-INTERVIEW - NIANP/ADV-3-CDN/2025-26

The walk-in-interview has been scheduled on 01.04.2026 at 10:30 AM for engagement of Young Professionals on a temporary basis, as detailed below:
1. Young Professional-II (₹42,000/- p.m. consolidated remuneration) Under Coconut Development Board Project -tenure up to July 2026.
2. Young Professional-I (₹30,000/- p.m.consolidated remuneration) Under Official Language (Hindi) Cell - initially for a period of one year.

Interested candidates are requested to visit the Institute website for detailed advertisement regarding qualifications, experience, age limit, and other terms & conditions: www.nianp.res.in

Sd/-
Administrative Officer

Centre removes caps on domestic airfares

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI, PTI: The government has removed temporary caps on domestic airfares that were imposed in the wake of the IndiGo flight disruptions in December last year.

The airfare caps removal will be effective from March 23, according to an order issued by the civil aviation ministry. The move also comes at a time when airlines are facing significant operational disruptions in international routes due to West Asia conflict. In the order, the ministry also said that airlines are required to exercise pricing discipline and act responsibly.

"Airlines shall ensure that fares remain reasonable, transparent and commensurate with market conditions, and that passenger interests are not adversely impacted," it said.

The ministry also stressed that any instance of excessive or unjustified surge in fares, would be viewed seriously.

In call with Modi, Iran Prez urges India's BRICS role to end hostilities

PM condemns attacks, calls for secure shipping lanes

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. PTI FILE

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday spoke with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and condemned attacks on critical infrastructure in West Asia while stressing the need to keep shipping lanes open and secure.

Pezeshkian conveyed to Modi that India, as the current chair of BRICS, can leverage its "independent role" in halting the "aggressions" against Iran and safeguarding peace and stability in the region.

The Iranian president also proposed setting up a regional security framework comprising West Asian countries to bring peace and stability in the region "without foreign interference", according to a readout released by Tehran.

In a post on 'X', Modi said he conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings to Pezeshkian and expressed hope that the festive season brings peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia.

"Spoke with President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian and conveyed Eid and Nowruz greetings. We expressed hope that this festive season brings peace, stability and prosperity to West Asia," the PM posted on X.

He reiterated India's condemnation of attacks on critical infrastructure in the region, which threaten regional stability and disrupt global supply chains.

"Reiterated the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation and ensuring that shipping lanes remain open and secure," he added.

The PM also appreciated Iran's continued support for the safety and security of Indian nationals in Iran.

This was the second telephonic conversation between Modi and President Pezeshkian since the current conflict began on February 28. On March 12, Pezeshkian had briefed PM Modi on the situation in Iran and shared his perspective on recent regional developments.

Separately, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar spoke to his Iranian counterpart Seyed Abbas Araghchi and discussed the conflict in West Asia and its implications for the larger region.

Amid the ongoing energy crunch and disruptions, India has intensified engagement with Iran, emphasising the need for uninterrupted movement of goods and energy supplies.

New Delhi remains concerned about the safety of Indians in West Asia and the blockage of LPG shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran has effectively restricted.

According to the Shipping Ministry, as many as 22 Indian-flagged ships remain stranded in the Persian Gulf due to the restrictions, of which six were loaded with LPG. India is in constant touch with Iran and other countries to secure the safe passage of these vessels and the safety of their crews.

Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route through which about 20% of the world's energy supplies are transported. Since the conflict escalated, very few ships have been permitted to cross it.

PM Modi has spoken with several world leaders since the conflict began.

(With PTI inputs)

Rahul warns of inflation, market pressure ahead

NEW DELHI, PTI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the Modi government of lacking both direction and strategy necessary to manage the current economic situation facing the nation.

Rahul Gandhi

Gandhi also expressed concern that the government will raise the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG following the elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and the UT of Puducherry scheduled next month.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the weakening value of rupee against the US dollar and a sharp rise in industrial fuel prices will inevitably lead to price hikes affecting every Indian.

He also claimed that while the government offers "empty rhetoric" and maintains that everything is "normal", the reality is that the rising costs of daily items will impact every household.

"The rupee weakening against the dollar and heading towards 100, along with a sharp rise in industrial fuel prices – these are not just numbers; they are clear signals of the inflation to come.

"The government may call it normal, but the reality is: Production and transport will become more expensive; MSMEs will be hit the hardest; prices of everyday items will go up; and FII money will flow out even faster, putting more pressure on the stock market," Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X.

In other words, he said, it is certain to have a direct and deep impact on every family's pocket.

"And it's just a matter of time – after the elections, the prices of petrol, diesel and LPG will be hiked too," Gandhi claimed.

"The Modi government has neither direction nor strategy – just empty rhetoric. The question is not what the government is saying, it is what is left on your plate," he claimed.

The Congress has been critical of the government's efforts to tackle the current situation arising out of the conflict in West Asia, which has affected India's energy requirements.

T'gana IT exports hit Rs 3.13L cr amid services sector surge

HYDERABAD, DHNS: Telangana's IT exports soared to Rs 3.13 lakh crore in 2024-25, reflecting a robust 16.6% growth over 2023-24, generating employment for over 9.39 lakh people, the state's Socio-Economic Outlook, released by the planning department, reported.

Hyderabad is home to over 1,500 IT/ITES companies and nearly 20% of India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs). By October 2025, as per the official data, the city had attracted 40 new GCCs, the highest in the country.

The recent state budget allocated Rs 875 crore to the IT Department. The services sector, which dominates the state's GSDP with IT as a key driver, saw its Gross State Value Added (GSVA) rise from Rs 9.96 lakh crore in 2024-25 (First Revised Estimates) to Rs 11.30 lakh crore in 2025-26 (Provisional Actual Estimates), recording the highest growth rate of 13.5%. The sector forms the bedrock of the state economy, contributing 68.6% of its GSVA in 2025-26.

A NITI Aayog report on GVA Trends and State-level Dynamics 2025 highlighted that Telangana, alongside Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, accounts for nearly 40% of India's total services output.

Telangana is also carving a niche in Generative AI. The NASSCOM India Generative AI Startup Landscape 2025 report noted the state hosts about 7% of India's total GenAI startups as of H1 CY2025, ranking fourth behind Karnataka (39%), Maharashtra (14%), and Delhi (9%).

Stealth frigate INS Taragiri to be commissioned on April 3

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Project-17A warship equipped with supersonic missiles and advanced anti-submarine systems.

Amid the ongoing turmoil in the Indian Ocean region, the Indian Navy will commission its most modern stealth frigate, Taragiri, early next month, packing more punch to the maritime force's firepower.

The induction ceremony in Visakhapatnam on April 3 will be presided over by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, official sources said here on Saturday.

To be named INS Taragiri, this is the fourth ship being commissioned under Project-17A (Nilgiri class), which involves the design and development of seven such frigates. Four of these warships were manufactured by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders in Mumbai, while Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers in Kolkata constructed the rest.

The remaining three Project-17A ships — Mahendragiri, Dunagiri and Vindhyagiri — were also likely to be commissioned in 2026, sources told *DH*.

With 75% indigenous content, the 6,670 tonnes Taragiri, the third Nilgiri-class ship built by MDL, marks a major milestone in naval design, stealth, firepower, automation and survivability.

Driven by a combined diesel or gas propulsion plant, the warship is designed for "high speed, high endurance versatility and multi-dimensional maritime operations," a navy spokesperson said.

"Its weapon suite features supersonic surface-to-surface missiles, medium-range surface-to-air missiles, and a specialised anti-submarine warfare suite," the spokesperson added. These systems are seamlessly integrated through a state-of-the-art combat management system, ensuring the crew can respond to threats with split-second precision.

The frigate features a sleeker design and a significantly reduced radar cross-section, allowing it to operate with lethal stealth.

Taragiri is among the 15 warships the Indian Navy seeks to commission in 2026 to expand its operational footprint.

FESTIVE GREETINGS

Children greet each other on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr to mark the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan in Kolkata on Saturday. REUTERS

Popular anti-obesity, diabetes drug gets cheaper in India

Diabetes drug, from Jacket Page 2

Obesity affects people in every country and was associated with 3.7 million deaths worldwide in 2024, the WHO says, noting that without decisive action, the number of people with obesity is projected to double by 2030.

India has about 180 million adults with excess weight or obesity, which is among the world's highest.

Last year, the World Health Organisation recommended inclusion of semaglutide and other drugs belonging to the same category in the list of essential medicines.

The WHO said the medicine could help people with type 2 diabetes – especially those who also have heart or kidney disease – by improving blood sugar control, reducing the risk of heart and kidney complications, supporting weight loss and even lowering the risk of early death.

GOVT TOOL ROOM & TRAINING CENTRE
Rajajinagar Industrial Estate, Bengaluru-560 010.
Phone No.080-23157189, **Fax:** 080-23301683
Website:**www.karnataka.gov.in/gttc** e-Mail: **gttc.projects@karnataka.gov.in**
Ref: GTTC/PROJ/CONS/PMC/BID-159/2025-26 Date: 21.03.2026

TIME EXTENSION

E-Tenders was invited from eligible **Project Management Consultants (PMC) with Third Party Inspection for the work of Supervision, Execution & Quality Control of GTTC New Projects.** The last date for uploading documents on the e-portal: **20.03.2026 has been extended to 30.03.2026 up to 5:30 PM.** Further details can be obtained through KPP Portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** or on Helpline No:**+ 91 80 23010900 + 91 80 23010901** during office hours.

Sd/- Managing Director

ಬಾಗಲಕೋಟ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ
(ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ರಾಜ್ಯ ಸಾರ್ವಜನಿಕ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ)
ಮುಧೋಳ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಜಮಖಂಡಿ–587301 ಬಾಗಲಕೋಟೆ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ
Mail ID: exams@bgku.ac.in
Website: https://bgku.karnataka.gov.in ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ವಿಭಾಗ Tel.No.(08353) 295123
BGKUJ/EC/2025-26/1099 Date:17.03.2026

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ

ಬಾಗಲಕೋಟ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯದ ಅಧೀನದಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಎಲ್ಲಾ ಮಹಾವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯಗಳ ಪ್ರಾಂಶುಪಾಲರು/ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು/ಡೀನರು ಗಳಿಗೆ ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ತಿಳಿಸುವುದೇನೆಂದರೆ, **ಬಾಗಲಕೋಟ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಜಮಖಂಡಿಯ** ಪ್ರಥಮ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಘಟಿಕೋತ್ಸವವನ್ನು ದರ್ಬಾರ ಸಭಾಂಗಣ, ಬಿ.ಎಲ್.ಡಿ ಆವರಣ, ಜಮಖಂಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ದಿನಾಂಕ: **24.04.2026** ರಂದು ನಡೆಸಲು ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ. **2023-24** ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರವೇಶ ಪಡೆದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಘಟಿಕೋತ್ಸವದ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳನ್ನು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ, ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ UUMS ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಘಟಿಕೋತ್ಸವದ ಅರ್ಜಿಗಳನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ದಿನಾಂಕ: **30.03.2026** ರವರೆಗೆ ಅವಕಾಶವನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಘಟಿಕೋತ್ಸವದ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯ ವಿವರವು ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯದ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ಲಭ್ಯವಿರುತ್ತದೆ. ಸದರಿ ಮಾಹಿತಿಯನ್ನು ತಮ್ಮ ಮಹಾವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ತಿಳಿಸಲು ಹಾಗೂ ಸದರಿ ಅವಕಾಶವನ್ನು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಸದುಪಯೋಗಪಡಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಈ ಮೂಲಕ ಸೂಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯದ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್: **https://bgku.karnataka.gov.in** ಹಾಗೂ ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ವಿಭಾಗ ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: **6363061606,** ಈ–ಮೇಲ್: **exams@bgku.ac.in** ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಲು ಕೋರಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಹಿ/–
ಕುಲಸಚಿವರು(ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನ)
ಬಾಗಲಕೋಟ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಜಮಖಂಡಿ

Rs 5.98 lakh pay: Guarantee panel head gets 2x CS

Guarantee panel, from Jacket Page 2

The taluk chairperson's salary is Rs 25,000 and the person heading the committee in Bengaluru is getting Rs 40,000.

These figures could reignite a fresh debate on government expenditure. The issue was raised in the Assembly last year, with the Opposition charging that Congress workers getting a government salary amounted to misuse of taxpayers' money.

In March 2020, as leader of the Opposition, Siddaramaiah warned then Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa of a "dark" future for Karnataka.

"We need to collectively look at revival—how we can reduce committed expenditure, revenue expenditure and ensure there's no revenue deficit," Siddaramaiah had said.

In the ongoing session of the legislature, Siddaramaiah is expected to address concerns over rising expenditures during his reply to the debate on the 2026-27 Budget, which he presented on March 6.

(Sujay BM contributed to reporting)

Solar manufacturers raise concerns over ALMM Phase II deadline

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

Manufacturers of solar energy products have expressed concern that the Union government's timeline to implement Phase II of the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) by June 2026 could jeopardise the sector, as the policy is not aligned with current supply chain realities.

Under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, all mega solar projects must use domestically manufactured, ALMM-approved solar cells. However, the industry faces a significant shortfall in domestic photovoltaic cell production needed to meet this requirement.

Industry insiders warn that a shortage of locally made solar cells could delay project execution across several states.

Experts note that while India has made rapid strides in solar capacity addition, domestic manufacturing is yet to catch up. In 2025, the country installed nearly 36.6 GW of solar power—almost three times the 13 GW added in 2022. However, domestic capacity for advanced TOPCon solar cells remains limited to around 10 GW.

Ramesh Shivanna, founding president of the Karnataka Renewable Energy Systems Manufacturers Association (KRESMA), said, "At this pace, India will continue to add 35–40 GW of solar capacity annually. However, sustaining this growth depends on a reliable and cost-competitive supply chain. Currently, there is a supply gap of nearly 25 GW in solar generation using domestically produced cells."

India used to import solar cells from countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and China, where costs are 40% to 50% lower than those of domestic production.

Industry experts also point out that many Indian manufacturers still depend on Mono-PERC technology, which is gradually becoming obsolete. Transition to more advanced TOPCon technology has

been slow due to limited production-linked incentives and issues related to basic customs duty exemptions.

A solar products manufacturer said that extending the deadline by at least a year could help India achieve self-sufficiency and even position itself as an exporter.

Ramesh added that while the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is taking steps to boost domestic manufacturing, capacity expansion has not kept pace with demand.

"There is a clear mismatch between policy intent and ground realities. Implementing ALMM Phase II without addressing supply constraints could slow project execution and increase costs," he said.

Stakeholders are also concerned about the financial impact, as higher domestic cell prices could affect project viability, particularly for large solar parks and government tenders. Developers may be forced to delay projects or pass on additional costs to consumers.

Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi, defending the policy, said self-reliance would be difficult without adhering to the timeline.

"India cannot remain dependent on other countries for solar cell production. Even during Phase I of ALMM, timelines were met. I am confident manufacturers will rise to the occasion," he said.

He added that India is already producing 27 GW of solar power using domestically manufactured cells.

B'luru's air pollution dipped by 4%...

Pollution, from Jacket Page 2

To tackle air pollution, the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has improved the green cover by planting thousands of saplings and taken up measures to bring down construction and debris waste.

However, experts said meteorological conditions play a crucial role in determining the air pollution levels and there is a need to analyse the factors resulting in such reduction of air pollution.

"Higher rainy days wash off the pollution, bringing the levels down. In 2024-25, Bengaluru received good rainfall and that would have definitely contributed to the reduction in pollution levels. That apart, various meteorological conditions, wind speeds also matter. Hence, it is important to analyse the contributing factors for reduction before drawing conclusions," said Prof Gufran Beig from the School of Natural Sciences and Engineering, National Institute of Advanced Studies. The data also showed that air pollution levels came down significantly during the Covid period. Though the levels have been increasing over the years, Bengaluru had not hit the pre-Covid levels by 2024-25. Experts opined that in 2025-26, air pollution levels would be much higher than the pre-Covid levels.

BWSSB to launch OTS scheme to recover dues

BWSSB, from Jacket Page 2

Shivakumar said the scheme would help reduce the financial burden on citizens and also help the BWSSB improve its finances. "The scheme is being implemented with the dual purpose of providing financial relief to more than 5.11 lakh customers in the city and strengthening the financial position of the board. By waiving Rs 311 crore in interests, the burden on citizens is being significantly reduced. The public should make good use of this golden opportunity in the coming three months," the deputy CM said in a statement.

Govt hikes commercial LPG allocation to 50%

LPG, from Jacket Page 2

In a letter to states and UTs, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said it has enhanced the allocation of commercial LPG by 20% to key sectors, including restaurants, hotels, industrial canteens, food processing units, dairy units, community kitchens, and subsidised food outlets operated by state governments or local bodies. It will also support migrant workers through targeted distribution of 5 kg cylinders. The additional allocation comes with the condition that all commercial and industrial LPG consumers must register with oil marketing companies (OMCs). OMCs must register these customers, maintain records of their sector, end-use of LPG, and annual requirements in their databases, said Neeraj Mittal, Secretary to the Ministry, in the letter.

The letter also said that all commercial LPG users have to apply for a piped natural gas (PNG) connection with the City Gas Distribution (CGD) entity in their area, where applicable.

Separately, an official statement said that domestic LPG supply remains stable, with no shortages reported at distributorships and normal delivery operations continuing. Even the panic bookings have declined significantly, and citizens are advised to avoid crowding at outlets and opt for home delivery.

To ease pressure on LPG supply, the government is encouraging consumers to shift to piped natural gas (PNG), especially for commercial establishments, and has urged states to fast-track approvals for city gas distribution networks.

Meanwhile, all refineries are operating at high capacity with sufficient crude inventories, ensuring adequate availability of petrol and diesel. No fuel shortages have been reported at retail outlets, and the public has been cautioned against panic buying. Natural gas supplies to priority segments, including domestic PNG and CNG for transport, are being fully maintained, while industrial consumers receive about 80% of their usual allocation. Additional measures include boosted domestic LPG production, extended booking intervals, and extra kerosene allocations to states as an alternative fuel option, the statement said.

As part of a crackdown on hoarding, over 3,500 raids have been conducted nationwide, resulting in the seizure of around 1,400 LPG cylinders. Most states have established control rooms and district-level monitoring committees to oversee supply and distribution, said the statement.

COMMUNITY CRISIS | Kuki-Naga clash tests the new govt's ability to restore stability

CM-Kuki talks spur hope for Manipur breakthrough

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

An elderly internally displaced person gets emotional during an interaction with Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand, unseen, at the Alternate Housing Complex, Langol in Imphal. PTI FILE

For small trader Laithangbam Noren, the Union government's decision to withdraw President's Rule and restore a regime led by a new chief minister, Yumbam Khemchand Singh, on February 4 raised hopes of returning to Churachandpur, a Kuki-dominated district in strife-torn Manipur.

However, the new government's inability to normalise Meitei-Kuki ties over the past 1.5 months has left Noren upset again. "We hope the conflict ends, the highways re-opened so that we can go back to our home," said the 49-year-old, who has been sheltering with his family, including aged parents, in a relief camp on the outskirts of Meitei-dominated Imphal, the state capital.

Hope, however, again flickered when the CM and leaders of the Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) — the apex body of the Kuki-Zo communities — met on Saturday, the first time since the government's restoration. The meeting, however, was held in Assam's Guwahati as the Meiteis and the Kukis remained firm on refusing movement between their territories until a solution was reached.

Meanwhile, the clamour for a National Register of Citizens has grown in the Valley, with Meitei women even clashing with security forces recently for it. The Meiteis demand that "illegal migrants" — mainly Kuki-Zo — be detected with 1951 as the cut-off date. The Kukis, on the other hand, are firm on the demand for a "separate administration" in the form of a Union Territory, comprising Manipur's Kuki-dominated areas.

"The KZC has not changed its demand, but we are keeping an open mind," KZC spokesperson Ginza Vualzong told *DH* hours before the meeting with the CM. The KZC has also been engaged in talks with the Union government.

The root of the discontent, according to Vualzong, lies primarily in unresolved land issues. "The Kuki, Naga, and Meitei communities all have competing claims and concerns over land, making it a deeply complex and sensitive issue. Equally pressing is the tribal communities' continued marginalisation, which has deepened divisions and grievances," he explained.

Outreach efforts

By appointing Nemcha Kipgen, a Kuki, and Lossii Dikho, a Naga, as deputy CMs, the Union government and the BJP tried to break the ice over the communities' demands. However, the CM — a Meitei — was not allowed to even visit displaced persons in Kuki-dominated districts like Churachandpur and Kangpokpi. He had to address them virtually from Imphal on February 19. Kipgen and Dikho, too, spoke to the displaced persons virtually.

Kipgen had to even take her oath over the internet, while six Kuki MLAs attended the Assembly session on March 9 — the first since the Meitei-Kuki conflict erupted on May 3, 2023 — virtually.

The Khemchand government received a jolt on February 22 when senior Kuki MLA Vungzagin Valte passed away nearly three years after he was critically injured in an alleged Meitei attack while returning after meeting the then-CM N Biren Singh in Imphal. Khemchand had facilitated airlifting Valte to New Delhi from the Imphal airport.

Valte's death was a blow to the new government's efforts to restore free movement and solve the conflict. Valte's kin have not accepted his body for burial, and say a solution must be reached. This has led the KZC and the Kukis in Manipur to reiterate that they could no longer live under a Meitei-led regime, and hence, a "separate administration" was a must.

Fresh conflict

The Nagas had stayed out of the Meitei-Kuki conflict. Fresh tensions, however, surfaced earlier this month due to violence between them in Ukhrul, a Naga-dominated district. It was an additional worry, given the history of large-scale Naga-Kuki violence from 1992 to 1998, when more than 1,000 people died.

Matters escalated on March 12, when the bodies of two Kuki men were found with bullet wounds. They had been missing since a firing took place between the Nagas and the Kukis a day earlier.

Amid all these, however, there was a silver lining: Manipur government sources said the Centre was trying to get Kuki-Zo organisations in a suspension-of-operations agreement to form an autonomous council.

However, the United Kuki National Army — an armed Kuki group not in truce — stressed on March 20 that meaningful and lasting peace must be preceded by justice to the victims and their families and accountability.

BJP faces Ahom challenge in Assam electoral contest

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

POLL BATTLE

- Ahom community, despite the BJP's shrill pitch for the "tholowa Axomiya (native Assamese)", has largely kept the party at arm's length.
- The community appears to be uniting under Congress-led Oppn's umbrella
- Cong's alliance with the AJP & Raijor Dal is perceived as formidable Oppn to ruling alliance.

The electoral battle in Assam is once again treading on familiar ground: regional identity and the fight against the "bohiragoto (outsiders)".

Assam Chief Minister and BJP strongman Himanta Biswa Sarma started his campaign by vowing to take on Bengali Muslims, whom he pejoratively calls "Miyas".

However, at the heart of this cycle's calculus lies a critical dynamic: The Ahoms, who have historically been the most influential ethno-cultural community in Assam's political landscape, are yet to show any signs of major support towards the BJP or the ruling NDA. The community, despite the BJP's shrill pitch for the "tholowa Axomiya (native Assamese)", has largely kept the party at arm's length.

ASSAM
Assembly Poll

In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP took on the Congress' CM face Gaurav Gogoi, he won by 1.44 lakh votes. Gaurav and his father, former CM and Congress veteran Tarun Gogoi, are from the Ahom community. Its silent support to Gaurav was palpable.

The Opposition appears determined to secure the support of the community that ruled Assam for 600 years and has a sizeable population of 13-14 lakh. They hold sway in Upper Assam, a region that often determines who rules the state.

The alliance between Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi and the Assam Jatiya Parishad's Lurin Gogoi, further bolstered by the entry of activist-politician Akhil Gogoi and his party, the Raijor Dol, signals a consolidation of Ahom sentiment under the Opposition.

Senior journalist and political analyst Sushanta Talukdar noted: "The BJP is banking on seats from Eastern Assam districts, where indigenous Assamese communities — Ahoms being one of them — play a decisive role."

He added: "With the Congress announcing an alliance with the AJP, Raijor Dal, CPM, CPIML, and the APHLC and reaching seat-sharing deals to field single candidates of this united Opposition, a new perception about the Opposition's strength and unity has started shaping in the minds of voters. They see this as a formidable Opposition to the BJP-led ruling alliance."

The ruling dispensation is not oblivious to this. To offset it and consolidate its electoral clout, the BJP's principal ally, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), has fielded 13 candidates from the Bengali-Muslim community.

The list comes amid Sarma's sustained rhetorical offensive against the demographic, and his accusations that the Congress appeases the community.

'Modi biggest infiltrator': Mamata at Eid gathering

KOLKATA, PTI: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday launched a sharp attack on the BJP-led Centre, accusing it of trying to snatch away voting rights through the SIR, describing Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the "biggest infiltrator" and warning that those targeting Bengal "should go to hell".

Addressing worshippers after Eid prayers at Kolkata's iconic Red Road, the TMC supremo described the upcoming assembly elections as a battle to protect democratic rights and Bengal's plural social fabric.

"We will not allow Modi ji and the BJP to take away your voting rights. We will fight till the end," Mamata told the gathering.

"When you go abroad, you shake hands with leaders and speak of friendship. That is your choice, and I respect all countries. But when you return to India, suddenly the Hindu-Muslim narrative begins, and people are called infiltrators," the chief minister said.

"You then call for deleting names and labelling people as infiltrators. I would say you and your government are the biggest infiltrators," Mamata said.

DMK's seat-sharing talks with allies hit a roadblock

SPA constituents demand more seats from senior partner

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

Seat-sharing talks within the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) for the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls have hit a roadblock due to persisting differences between the DMK and junior partners such as the CPM, VCK, and actor Kamal Haasan's MNM.

Once an agreement is reached, the DMK will formally launch negotiations with the DMDK and a few small parties that have been inducted into the alliance to counter anti-incumbency.

TAMIL NADU
Assembly Poll

The number of seats to be allotted to actor-politician Vijayakanth's DMDK being kept in suspense is also another reason for existing allies like the VCK to be disappointed with the DMK.

While the DMK is asking the CPM to accept five Assembly seats, down from the six it contested in 2021, the VCK is being offered seven-eight seats instead of the 10 it demanded. The CPM is categorical that it cannot accept five seats, and convened an urgent meeting to discuss the situation on Saturday.

The parties have also pointed to the Congress getting three seats more than its 2021 figure of 25, along with a Rajya Sabha berth, while pressing for more seats from the DMK.

The DMK has so far allotted 28 seats to the Congress, two to the IUML, two to the MMK, four to the MDMK, and a couple of seats to other parties. It has cited the alliance's expansion for reducing the number of existing seats.

"The DMK itself will be contesting fewer seats compared to the 2021 polls," a senior DMK leader told *DH*.

However, VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan, a prominent Dalit leader in the state, expressed disappointment to his cadres on Saturday when he told them to prepare to contest fewer than 10 seats.

The DMDK, whose vote share has dwindled to a mere 1% and which has already been allotted a Rajya Sabha seat, will be one of the last parties to be invited for negotiations.

BJP releases first list of candidate for Puducherry

Home Minister A Namassivayam, Assembly Speaker Embalam R Selvam, and state unit chief V P Ramalingam are some of the prominent names in the first list of candidates released by the BJP for the Assembly elections in Puducherry, reports DHNS.

Former minister A K Sai J Saravanan Kumar has been denied a seat, with the party fielding E Theepainthan from Oussudu (SC).

The party has announced candidates for nine of the 10 seats it has been allotted; the name of the 10th seat is still under discussion between the AINRC and BJP.

More celebrities join Kerala poll fray

ARJUN RAGHUATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

BJP Kerala president Rajeev Chandrasekhar interacts with an elderly during campaigning for state Assembly elections in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday. PTI

As the CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) finalised their remaining candidates for the Kerala Assembly elections, two more actors have entered the fray.

Sudheer Karamana has been fielded as an LDF-backed Independent from Thiruvananthapuram, while television actor and anchor Vivek Gopan is the NDA candidate from Aruvikkara on the suburbs of the state capital.

KERALA
Assembly Poll

Sudheer, son of late actor Karamana Janardhanan Nair, made a surprise entry after sitting MLA Antony Raju of the LDF ally Janadhipatya Kerala Congress was disqualified following his conviction in an evidence-tampering case linked to narcotics.

With the party unable to find a replacement, the LDF turned to Sudheer, a former activist of the CPM's student wing, the Students' Federation of India, who continues to be seen as a Left sympathiser.

He will face United Democratic Front (UDF) candidate C P John of the Communist Marxist Party — an outfit of disgruntled CPM leaders formed by former minister M V Raghavan in 1986 — and the BJP's Thiruvananthapuram city district president Karamana Jayan.

For Vivek Gopan, this is his second electoral contest. He had contested as a BJP candidate from Chavara in Kollam in the 2021 Assembly election, finishing third.

Several other actors are also in the fray. Ramesh Pisharady is contesting as the UDF candidate from Palakkad, while Anjali Nair is the NDA-Twenty20 candidate in Thripunithura.

However, actors Veena Nair and Lakshmi Priya, fielded by Twenty20, had to withdraw after their names were not found in the electoral rolls.

Actor-turned-politician and Transport Minister K B Ganesh Kumar is seeking re-election from his Pathanapuram as an LDF candidate.

Meanwhile, CPM's Kollam MLA M Mukes is not contesting this time amid sexual assault cases filed against him by women in the film industry.

Mammootty's blessings

Palakkad's Congress candidate Pisharady received a video call from actor Mammootty, just ahead of filing nomination on Saturday.

Recently, Mammootty incurred the wrath of CPM supporters after he asked a local leader from the party in Wayanad to keep distance from him, and also hailed the recently inaugurated township for landslide survivors in Wayanad as a people's project.

CPM camps, which were highlighting the Wayanad township as a major achievement of the Pinarayi Vijayan government, were irked by Mammooty's remarks.

What followed was a barrage of online attacks against Mammootty by CPM activists.

Coal output hits 1 billion tonnes for second year

NEW DELHI, DHNS: In a boost to the country's energy security, India has achieved 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production for the second consecutive year.

"With sustained and coordinated efforts across the coal sector and the invaluable contribution of all stakeholders, the country has successfully achieved the landmark of 1 billion tonne (BT) coal production on March 20, 2026, for the second year in a row," the coal ministry said in a statement.

The higher and sustained coal output has helped the country meet rising energy demand and supported the power sector in maintaining record coal inventories at coal-based thermal plants, the statement said.

This performance showcases strong planning, efficient execution and tighter coordination across the coal value chain, and is adding significantly to the nation's growth momentum, it said.

The coal ministry said it remains firmly focused on nurturing a stable, transparent and performance-oriented ecosystem. By rolling out proactive policy measures, closely tracking performance and actively engaging with stakeholders, it is ensuring dependable coal availability, it said.

BJD suspends 6 MLAs for RS cross-voting

BHUBANESWAR, PTI: The Biju Janata Dal on Saturday suspended six of its MLAs for cross-voting during the recent election to four Rajya Sabha seats from Odisha.

The suspension decision was taken at the opposition party's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) meeting presided over by Patnaik.

The six MLAs were issued a show-cause notice on March 17.

They submitted their replies on Friday evening, and those were found not satisfactory, said the BJD's chief whip in the Assembly, Pramila Mallik.

HEALTH ALERT

Study maps antibiotic resistance in wastewater

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

Researchers from the Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and partner institutions found common antimicrobial resistance (AMR) genes in bacteria across Indian cities.

Antimicrobial drugs like antibiotics kill bacteria and protect humans from many deadly bacterial diseases. But bacteria are becoming resistant to antibiotics; antibiotics are not able to kill these microbes as effectively anymore.

This situation is called antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and is killing millions of people every year worldwide. Despite that, data on the local prevalence of AMR is largely missing in India. We do not know which deadly bacteria around us might be the most resistant to available antibiotics, or if they all follow similar mechanisms to become resistant.

Researchers from the CCMB and partner institutions have published a landmark study in 'Nature Communications' providing the first comprehensive AMR map in Indian urban wastewater. They utilized a shotgun metagenomics approach that looks into the details of bacterial genes. Through these genes, researchers can estimate how bacteria become resistant.

Conducted between March 2022 and March 2024, the study analysed 447 samples from 19 sites across Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai. The findings reveal a complex landscape - different bacteria are abundant in different cities, but they follow similar ways of resisting antibiotics. Bacteria become resistant to antibiotics, thanks to certain genes. These genes either help the bacteria make stronger cell walls through which antibiotic cannot go into bacteria at all; or help the bacteria metabolise or throw out the antibiotic molecules from their cells or even destroy the antibiotic molecules.

CCMB researchers on Saturday said that bacteria can share these genes not only with their offspring but also with their neighbours. The study finds that the microbial communities shifted based on local environmental factors. For example, Klebsiella pneumoniae is more abundant in Chennai and Mumbai, and Pseudomonas aeruginosa in Kolkata.

Beyond identifying threats, the researchers proposed the widespread use of wastewater-based pathogen surveillance in the country.

Cow vigilante's death sparks violence in Mathura

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

People stage a protest after a cow vigilante was run over by a truck on a highway, in Mathura, on Saturday. PTI

Large-scale violence erupted in Mathura after a cow vigilante known as 'Farsa Baba' was allegedly run over by a speeding truck on Saturday while he was 'inspecting' vehicles following a tip-off about alleged cattle smuggling.

The incident sparked protests and a highway blockade on a day when President Droupadi Murmu was visiting the district. Angry locals blocked the national highway, triggering traffic snarls that stretched for several kilometres.

District Magistrate Chandra Prakash Singh said the incident took place around 4 am near Kosi Kalan, when the vigilante, identified as Chandrashekhar, along with his associates, stopped a Nagaland-registered container on suspicion of transporting cattle. The vehicle, however, was found to be carrying grocery items such as soap, phenyl and shampoo.

He said due to dense fog, a Rajasthan-registered truck carrying wire rammed into them from behind, leading to Chandrashekhar's death on the spot. The truck driver, who sustained serious injuries, later died at a hospital in Agra.

Alleging that the cow smugglers intentionally killed him, thousands of people assembled on the Agra-Delhi Highway, blocking traffic in protest against the incident. The angry mob ransacked police vehicles and indulged in heavy stone pelting, in which several police personnel were injured. The police made a lathi charge and used rubber bullets to disperse the mob. Dozens of people were arrested on charges of indulging in violence.

WAR IMPACT Not working with Beirut against Hezbollah may harm long-term interests

Israel's Lebanon campaign risks strategic blowback

SHIRA EFRON

The fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, for now, runs parallel to the US-Israeli war on Iran. But Lebanon will become a main arena when the campaign against Tehran ends.

Israel began planning its operation in Lebanon months ago when it became apparent that, since the November 2024 ceasefire, Hezbollah had not depleted its rocket and missile arsenal, had rebuilt its command structure and restored its ability to fight, and that, despite promises, the Lebanese government had not fully disarmed the terrorist group. On March 2, after Hezbollah joined the Iranian counterattack and fired at the Galilee, Israel seized the opportunity to go on the offensive.

It is widely agreed that action against Hezbollah — an internationally recognised terrorist group and a Shiite Muslim political party in Lebanon's multisectarian society — is necessary.

However, a prolonged Israeli military operation, the destruction of state infrastructure and a wider presence in southern Lebanon, as Israeli officials now propose, could further undermine weak Lebanese institutions, turn its people against Israel and further entrench Hezbollah's resistance narrative. That is precisely the opposite of what Israel and the region need.

Washington now has an opportunity to save Israel from itself and create a clear distinction: fight Hezbollah, yes; punish all of Lebanon in doing so, no. The Trump administration should rein in Israel's military operation, make serious efforts to bolster the Lebanese state and military so that they can crack down on Hezbollah and broker a security arrangement that could even lead to peace.

Israel's interventions in Lebanon, dating back to 1978, have been recurrent and costly. The 1982 invasion, intended to oust the Palestine Liberation Organization, became a nearly two-decade occupation and guerrilla war that helped catalyse Hezbollah's rise. In late 2024, after months of exchanging rockets with Hezbollah tied to the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack, Israel mounted a campaign of targeted strikes on the Hezbollah command, weapons systems and caches, logistics and finance nodes, and seized five hilltops inside Lebanon while widening a buffer zone to protect residents of the Galilee, who were evacuated after the October 7 assault.

This month's escalation prompted an Israeli aerial bombardment that has left more than 960 Lebanese dead and led to the flight of more than a million people. Hezbollah has fired at least 1,000 rockets and drones, and at least two Israeli soldiers were killed in combat in southern Lebanon. The campaign has now expanded into a ground operation in southern Lebanon, with the capture of additional positions and expansion of a buffer zone north of the border.

Israel's latest decision to go on the offensive against Hezbollah rests on a bleak assessment of Lebanon's ability to control its own territory. The Lebanese government approved a plan to disarm Hezbollah more than six months ago. According to the US Central Command, the Lebanese Armed Forces removed nearly 10,000 rockets and almost 400 missiles by the end of October. The Lebanese Army also retook control of the Beirut airport, believed to be a key node in a smuggling network run by Hezbollah.

An Israeli self-propelled howitzer artillery gun fires rounds towards southern Lebanon from a position in the upper Galilee in northern Israel near the border on Friday. AFP

The Israeli campaign, however necessary it might be, is not enough to fully disarm Hezbollah. New leaders can quickly take the place of those who have been killed. Arsenals can be rebuilt. Relying solely on the weak Lebanese Army will not work either. Lebanon's government needs to step up — and gain backing from the United States and Israel — to reduce Hezbollah's political role and further distance its narrowing support base among many Lebanese Shiites.

Israeli overreach in the campaign and failure to frame the fight as a war on Hezbollah, but not on the state of Lebanon, risks squandering a rare diplomatic opening.

On March 9, President Joseph Aoun of Lebanon accused Hezbollah of working toward the "collapse" of the state and proposed a plan that includes international logistical support for the Lebanese Army, an immediate effort to dismantle Hezbollah's weapons stockpiles and direct talks with Israel. Israel has not responded publicly, but unnamed sources said on Sunday that the two countries were expected to hold talks.

Israeli officials dismissed the Lebanese call for talks as no more than an attempt to reach an immediate ceasefire. But they overlook steps taken by the Lebanese government to outlaw Hezbollah's activities and the arrests of militants for having illegal arms. They also ignored a broader and rare softening of anti-Israel rhetoric in the past few months and far wider support for disarming Hezbollah. Political leaders of different sects have voted in favour of banning Hezbollah's military activities and some have even called for peace with Israel. Lebanese media outlets now feature formerly outlawed ideas, including direct engagement with Israel.

In Israel, hard-line members of the governing coalition warn that Lebanon will suffer devastation. Energy and Infrastructure Minister Eli Cohen said on Sunday that Israel is considering cancelling a 2022 maritime border agreement with Lebanon.

However, a prolonged Israeli presence in Lebanon will generate friction, cost lives and feed the very narrative of resistance that Hezbollah exploits. This moment offers a rare chance to target a militia without making war on the Lebanese people or state. The strategic aim must be peace with Beirut, not a perpetual Lebanese front.

NYT News Service

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Robert Mueller, special counsel who probed Trump, dies at 81

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller reacts to applause from the audience during his farewell ceremony at the Justice Department in Washington. REUTERS FILE

Robert Mueller, the no-nonsense former FBI chief who documented Russia's interference in the 2016 US election and its contacts with Donald Trump's campaign but opted not to bring criminal charges against a sitting president, has died at the age of 81, his former law firm confirmed on Saturday, Reuters reports from Washington.

Media reports did not mention a cause of death for Mueller, a decorated Vietnam War veteran who led the FBI in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. The New York Times last year reported that Mueller had Parkinson's disease. WilmerHale, where Mueller had worked as a lawyer until his retirement in 2021, said it mourned Mueller's passing. "Bob was an extraordinary leader and public servant and a person of the greatest integrity," the law firm said. Mueller retired after 12 years as FBI director in 2013 but was summoned back to public service by a senior Justice Department official four years later as a special counsel to take over an inquiry into Russia's election meddling after Trump fired then-FBI chief James Comey. Mueller conducted a 22-month probe that produced indictments against 34 people, including several Trump associates as well as Russian intelligence officers. Mueller ultimately stopped short of a criminal indictment of the Republican president.

Trump on Saturday celebrated Mueller's passing. "Good, I'm glad he's dead," Trump wrote on the Truth Social site. "He can no longer hurt innocent people!"

South Korea car factory fire kills 14

Fourteen people were killed in a fire at a car parts factory in South Korea that also injured 59 others, authorities told AFP on Saturday, updating a previous toll of 11 fatalities, AFP reports from Seoul.

Fire crews were initially unable to enter the factory in the central city of Daejeon to look for survivors due to the risk of the building collapsing. The response was also hampered by sodium stored at the site, which can explode if improperly handled, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency. Around 170 workers were at the plant when the fire broke out at about 1 pm (0400 GMT) on Friday, according to Yonhap. "We can confirm the latest death toll has risen to 14, with no one reported missing," an official from the interior ministry's department that handles fires and other disasters told AFP. Officials have not said what may have caused the fire, which spread rapidly.

Kpop group BTS perform during 'BTS The Comeback Live Arirang' concert in Seoul on Saturday. REUTERS

South Africans protest US pressure

Thousands of South Africans marched Saturday to demand respect for their nation's sovereignty after months of pressure from US President Donald Trump on issues from trade to race relations, AFP reports from Johannesburg.

Trump has clashed repeatedly with South Africa's government, hitting the country with high tariffs, berating President Cyril Ramaphosa in the Oval Office over discredited claims of a "white genocide", and boycotting a G20 summit in Johannesburg last year. Marking Human Rights Day in South Africa -- the anniversary of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, when apartheid police opened fire on a crowd of black protesters -- Ramaphosa's party called for marches "in defence of our sovereignty and democratic gains". The marches come 10 days after South Africa summoned US Ambassador Brent Bozell just a month after his arrival in the country for "undiplomatic remarks".

Himalayan glaciers losing ice fast

Glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalaya are melting at an accelerating rate, with ice loss rates doubling since 2000 even as they lost 12 per cent of their area between 1990 and 2020, two reports by ICIMOD said on Saturday.

Coinciding with the World Day for Glaciers, observed annually on March 21, the reports were published by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, a regional inter-governmental body headquartered in Kathmandu, providing the most comprehensive evidence of glacier change in the region.

22 nations back efforts to ensure safe passage in Strait of Hormuz

Countries condemn Iran's closure of key shipping route in West Asia

DUBAI, AFP

More than 20 countries on Saturday said they would contribute to efforts to ensure safe passage in the Strait of Hormuz, condemning Iran's closure of the vital waterway.

"We condemn in the strongest terms recent attacks by Iran on unarmed commercial vessels in the Gulf, attacks on civilian infrastructure including oil and gas installations, and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iranian forces," said the 22 countries, mostly European but also including the UAE and Bahrain.

"We express our readiness to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait. We welcome the commitment of nations that are engaging in preparatory planning," they said in a joint statement.

Protesters call for the bombing of Iran to stop during a rally in London on Saturday. AFP

Iran's threat to Strait of Hormuz 'degraded': US

The US military said on Saturday that Iran's ability to threaten the Strait of Hormuz has been "degraded" by the bombing this week of an underground facility where it stored cruise missiles and other weaponry, AFP reports from Washington.

"We not only took out the facility, but also destroyed intelligence support sites and missile radar relays that were used to monitor ship movements," Admiral Brad Cooper, commander of US Central Command, said.

After the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, Tehran retaliated with strikes on its Gulf neighbours as well as on vessels in the strait. From March 1 to 19, commodities carriers made just 116 crossings, — a decrease of 95 per cent from peacetime averages.

Iran says Natanz nuclear site hit

DUBAI, AP/PTI: Iran's Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was hit in an airstrike on Saturday, an official Iranian news agency reported, saying there was no radiation leakage, as the Israeli defence minister warned of an upcoming surge in attacks on Iran as the war in West Asia entered its fourth week.

Israel Katz, the defence minister, said in a video statement that next week, "the intensity of the attacks" by Israel and the US against Iran's ruling theocracy will "increase significantly".

CONFLICTING VIEW

■ US President Donald Trump said on Friday that he was considering "winding down" military operations in West Asia even as his administration is sending three additional amphibious assault ships and roughly 2,500 additional Marines to the region.

US jury finds Elon Musk misled Twitter shareholders

SAN FRANCISCO, AFP

A federal jury in California found Friday that tech tycoon Elon Musk misled Twitter shareholders, driving down the company's share price as he was poised to buy it in a USD 44 billion deal.

The verdict in the class-action securities lawsuit means the world's richest person could be ordered to pay billions of dollars, according to damages calculated by jurors. Minutes after the judgment was announced, the entrepreneur's lawyers informed AFP that their client will appeal the decision, characterising it as a "setback".

After a three-week trial in a San Francisco federal court — which included in-person testimony from Musk — the jury found that two tweets posted in May 2022 by the Tesla and SpaceX CEO contained false statements responsible for a plunge in Twitter's share price.

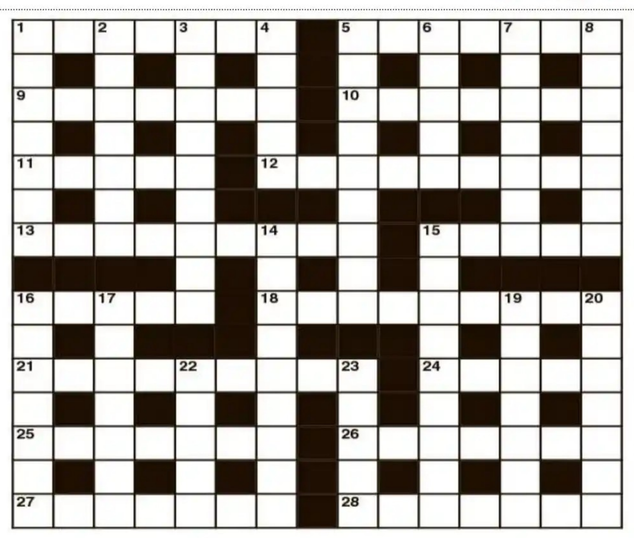
Investor Giuseppe Pampena had filed the suit on behalf of people who sold Twitter shares between mid-May and early October 2022.

Musk acquired the social media platform in late October 2022 and later renamed it X. Jurors agreed that Musk violated a securities rule that bars false and misleading statements that sink a stock price, in this case that of Twitter, the verdict form showed. An attorney for the plaintiffs estimated the damages at about USD 2.6 billion. Musk, who has a near-constant presence on X, did not immediately react to the verdict.

The judgment marks a rare legal defeat for Musk, often dubbed "Teflon Elon" for his ability to emerge unscathed from lawsuits he is expected to lose. His lawyers, in fact, reminded AFP of this track record, noting that a Texas court cleared him earlier the same day in a separate defamation case.

In 2023, a jury in the same San Francisco federal court cleared him within hours of similar charges brought by Tesla shareholders, following his 2018 tweets claiming he had the funding to take the automaker private.

◆ SUNDAY CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 2672 ◆



ACROSS

1 Impute (7)
5 Alluring charm (7)
9 Come to grips with (7)
10 Tardy (7)
11 Inaccuracy (5)
12 Large venomous spider (9)
13 Painful when touched (9)
15 Stealing (5)
16 Commonplace (5)
18 Be assiduously careful (4,5)
21 Previously (2,3,4)
24 Insist on (5)
25 Of questionable truth (7)
26 Din and bustle (7)
27 Ostensible reason (7)
28 Bullfighter (7)

DOWN

1 North African capital city (7)
2 Acute annoyance (7)
3 Unprejudiced (9)
4 Bring to bear (5)
5 Rampage in a fury (2,7)
6 Inclusive of everything (3-2)
7 Behave in pushy way (7)
8 Glowing (7)
14 While being conveyed (2,7)
15 Having highest security rating (3-6)
16 Advance publicity (5-2)
17 Striking (7)
19 To put it briefly (2,1,4)
20 Colonist (7)
22 Run away with a lover (5)
23 Tribal emblem (5)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 4032

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 8, Insight (incite) 9, Plane tree 13, Uncut 14, Claud (clawed) 15, Sighted (cited) 16, Reserve 17, L-I-the 18, Flame 20, Dirty 22, Spring 23, Avers-E 25, Catch-up 27, Current 30, Gloo-my 31, Ho-nest 32, Press 35, Tes-sa (rev) 36, Over-t 37, No-St-rum 39, En-sure-d 41, Al-red 42, A-DD-le 43, Fir-st rat-e 44, Swallow.

DOWN: 1, Knocks 2, Bitterly 3, Chickens out 4, G-lads-tone 5, An-I-see-d 6, Stage fever 7, Left 10, Pu-trid 11, Callers 12, Adh-ere 19, Arrange 21, Reas-O-ns 24, Cutting down 26, Came across 28, For-etaste 29, Re-store 30, Gather 32, Pass-able 33, Summer 34, Won-der-s 38, Red-h-ot 40, Slip.

EASY

ACROSS: 8, Musical 9, Parachute 13, Apron 14, Clamp 15, Timpani 16, Old Bill 17, Donor 18, Alpha 20, Earth 22, Tanker 23, Azalea 25, Apricot 27, Silence 30, Trifle 31, Defect 32, Sonar 35, Dream 36, Tonic 37, Ringlet 39, Uncanny 41, Evens 42, Stain 43, Contender 44, Tuneful.

DOWN: 1, Putrid 2, Fiendish 3, Calculation 4, Carpenter 5, Battery 6, Chimpanzee 7, Etna 10, Parole 11, Sardine 12, Cicada 19, Pelican 21, Reptile 24, Picturesque 26, Illuminate 28, Meandered 29, Teacher 30, Tedium 32, Sinister 33, Rating 34, Staying 38, League 40, Crow.

SU DO KU X - 3862

		7				8		5
			9				4	
						9	6	
	2							
		8	2	7		6	9	
		5	6					3
		3						
5	8	9	7					4
	4						3	

SOLUTION TO 3861

9	8	2	4	5	7	3	6	1
7	6	4	8	1	3	5	2	9
1	3	5	2	9	6	4	7	8
2	4	7	1	6	5	9	8	3
5	9	8	7	3	4	6	1	2
6	1	3	9	8	2	7	5	4
4	2	6	3	7	1	8	9	5
3	7	9	5	2	8	1	4	6
8	5	1	6	4	9	2	3	7

To solve the puzzle:
The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

TESTING TIMES The reigning World champ, who will defend his crown later this year, has failed to win any big title

Gukesh's slip in form concerning

PRAVIN THIPSAY

Gukesh's dip in form is indeed concerning. Generally, there are no logical explanations for how someone at the age of 19 or 20 -- like Arjun Erigaisi, who I think is maybe two years older than Praggnanandhaa -- reaches that level.

You must have noticed that there was a time when we had three players in the top 10, and now we have none. At one point, Arjun had reached 2800 and was world No. 3, behind players like Carlsen and Nakamura. So, I think it's disappointing not just for the individual, but also for the country. It becomes a matter of concern because we believe that growth should be continuous. You keep enchancing knowledge and improving. Yet, we now see even a phenomenal 14-year-old like Yagız Kaan Erdogmus becoming one of the most feared opponents.

I've been observing things since around 2021, during the lockdown period, when the age of successful players seemed to drop. There are several factors behind this. Let me start with the most important one, which I've also discussed with the parents of players also.

They are playing too much. In my opinion, they are simply overplaying. The human brain has its limits -- whether you are 10 or 20. Just like physical work, intellectual work also has its limits. You cannot sustain continuous high-level thinking without rest.

After the lockdown, players started participating in a large number of tournaments. I'm speaking generally -- not just about Gukesh, but also players like Praggnanandhaa and Arjun, to some extent. They gained fame and recognition and opportunities increased.

They were fortunate that the Olympiad was held in India in 2022. Before that, the same team would repeatedly participate due to strict selection criteria based on international ratings. But when India fielded two teams, younger players like Praggnanandhaa and Gukesh got the chance to play on the top boards for India B, and they actually finished above India A.

That exposure was crucial. They played freely, faced a variety of opponents and expressed their natural game. However, things changed after that. Their status rose significantly, especially after winning gold, and they began receiving many invitations to elite tournaments.

Now, these invitations come with financial incentives, including appearance fees that are often higher than the prize money. As a result, playing tournaments becomes a priority over actual improvement. Players hesitate to decline such opportunities, especially when organisers have supported them from a young age.

This leads to a packed schedule: tournaments, online events like Titled Tuesday, endorsements and sponsorships. Even top players like Carlsen and Nakamura participate in such events, often for financial reasons.

In India, the situation is even more intense. A player's public profile here can be much bigger than someone like Caruana's in the US. Players receive endorsements, brand deals and public recognition. For example, being appointed a brand ambassador or winning major titles brings both financial rewards and additional responsibilities.

While this is beneficial financially, it can divert focus. Players cannot easily refuse such commitments, and over time, their attention shifts away from pure chess improvement.

Another important factor is the type of tournaments they play. Earlier, players like Gukesh competed in open tournaments, facing a wide range of opponents -- from 1800-rated players to strong grandmasters. This variety helped them develop creativity and adaptability. However, in elite closed tournaments, players mostly face each other repeatedly. Preparation becomes highly specific; focused on openings against particular opponents. This limits creativity.

Earlier, they played freely without overthinking preparation, which helped them achieve remarkable results. For example, Gukesh's performance in the Olympiad, where he scored eight out of eight on the top board, showed his strength against a variety of opponents.

Now, with heavy reliance on opening preparation and computer analysis, originality is being compromised. Players often memorise moves without fully understanding the ideas behind them. This becomes evident when they face unexpected moves and struggle to respond effectively.

In contrast, players like Anand or even older legends like Kasparov relied on fundamentals and understanding, allowing them to handle surprises better.

Another issue is over-reliance on purchased opening preparation. Many players buy ready-made analysis, which tells them the "best moves" but doesn't develop their own thinking process. As a result, they may know what to play but not why.

This lack of understanding affects their performance. For instance, a player might introduce a novelty in the opening but then spend a long time thinking soon after, indicating a lack of deep comprehension.

There's also a psychological shift. Players aim for safe positions and avoid risks, especially in elite tournaments where draws are common and acceptable. This reduces fighting spirit and creativity.

In contrast, open tournaments punish draws against weaker opponents, forcing players to push for wins. That competitive pressure is essential for growth.

Another concern is early burnout. No player has been a world champion if he has not reached top five in the rating before 23 years of age. While peak performance traditionally occurs around 27–28, early success might also lead to earlier decline if not managed properly.

We've seen similar patterns in other fields, whether in athletics or academics, where early brilliance sometimes leads to burnout. While I hope this is not the case for these players, it remains a possibility.

Ultimately, these players are stronger and more knowledgeable than before. Their decline is not due to lack of skill, but rather execution and mindset.

To regain their form, they need to return to what made them successful: playing freely, maintaining creativity, competing in diverse tournaments and trusting their own insticts rather than relying entirely on preparation.

(India's first GM and renowned coach Thipsay spoke to Madhu Jawali)

Reigning FIDE World Chess Champion D Gukesh has been going through a lean patch since becoming the youngest player to win the title in December 2024. PTI FILE PHOTO

Tumakuru to host first-ever ITF Women's W35 competition

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a significant boost to Karnataka's growing tennis stature, Tumakuru is set to host its first-ever ITF Women's World Tennis Tour W35 tournament from May 4-10.

The competition will be held at the Tumkur District Tennis Stadium in the Tumkur University Campus.

The upcoming W35 will be the second international event in Tumakuru's history and the first-ever ITF Women's tournament in over two decades.

The USD 30,000 event is part of the global ITF Women's circuit, offering a pathway for players to earn professional ranking points and progress towards the WTA Tour.

Emerging international players and top Indian professionals will compete across a 32-player singles main draw and qualifying.

Following a successful run of international tournaments in Bengaluru and Kalaburagi, the event strengthens Karnataka's presence on the global tennis calendar and reflects efforts to take the sport beyond established centres.

The tournament marks a historic moment for Tumakuru, which last hosted an international tennis event in 2003 -- the ATP Challenger (Tumkur Open).

TABLE TENNIS

Yashaswini crowned National champion

Only the third woman paddler from Karnataka to win the coveted title

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Yashaswini Ghorpade (left) with her coach Anshuman Roy after winning the women's singles title at the 87th Senior National & Inter-State Table Tennis Championship in Indore.

While it wasn't exactly a slump, Yashaswini Ghorpade's performances during the early months of a fresh season weren't to the best of her liking. The constant travel had given the Karnataka paddler little time to work on her game and mentally, she was struggling to zone-in fully.

For a player who ended 2025 as India's No. 2, the recent struggles saw a dip in her ranking that placed the 21-year-old as low as eighth in the seeding at the 87th Senior National & Inter-State Table Tennis Championship in Indore. It was going to be another week and another uphill climb.

Fully aware of the stakes at the biggest domestic tournament, the soft-spoken Yashaswini not only faced her own demons head-on but also shut out the outside noise of the doubters to crown herself the senior National champion in a dramatic fashion. The Bengaluru girl, representing Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) at the event, secured her maiden women's singles National title by overcoming fellow PSPB paddler Syndrela Das in a 4-3 thriller. In what turned out to be a 60-minute roller-coaster, Yashaswini secured a 11-6, 12-14, 11-5, 9-11, 13-11, 6-11, 11-8 victory to become only the third woman from Karnataka to claim the coveted prize after Archana Kamath in 2019 and Usha Sunderraj, whose last of the five titles came in 1968.

"I still don't feel anything... Nothing great. I just feel normal, I think. The win hasn't kicked in yet. But yeah, I'm really tired," Yashaswini told *DH* over phone.

"I had lost 1-4 to her last September. She played amazing then and today too. Her backhand is very strong and she is really amazing for her age. But I was prepared for all those shots from her. I kept my nerves in check and I really enjoyed my game today," she explained.

Yashaswini credited the preparations, home food and staying close to family and friends for more than two weeks for her good outing at the Nationals. The 20-odd days in the city had given the youngster enough time to physically cool off, work on technical weaknesses and calm a cluttered mind. The rare off in the busy schedule came because Yashaswini decided to skip playing the WTT Feeder tournament in Dusseldorf in Germany because of travel uncertainties due to the West Asia crisis.

"I was home after a long time. That made a huge difference in the way I performed these past few days.

"The senior national title has a lot of respect. It will definitely be the most special trophy in my cabinet so far," said Yashaswini, who has also clinched the under-15 (Sub-junior) and U-19 (Junior) national titles once each.

Speaking about his wards' spoils -- winning seven rounds en route to the top of the podium -- coach Anshuman Roy expressed relief and pride in the manner in which Yashaswini handled a daunting task.

"We were dreaming about this from the last two years. And she finally achieved it even if the odds were all against her," offered Anshuman, who trains the latest National champion at his academy - UTT Skies High Performance Centre in JP Nagar here.

Inter Kashi test awaits the Blues

Bengaluru sit seventh on the table with eight points

BENGALURU, DHNS

Renedy Singh

LIVE 7:30 PM, SONY SPORTS NETWORK

Bengaluru FC will look to extend their unbeaten run in the Indian Super League as they face ISL debutants Inter Kashi at the Kishore Bharati Krirangan in Kolkata on Sunday.

While the Blues enter the tie on the back of an intense goalless draw against Mohun Bagan Super Giant at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru, the hosts will look to return to winning ways following two consecutive defeats against Mumbai City FC and Jamshedpur FC.

Renedy Singh's Blues became the first side to ensure the Mariners dropped points last week, ending their four-game winning run in the ISL with an incredible display of resilience and purpose in front of their home crowd. Kashi, on the other hand, fell short to Mumbai as they went down 2-1, courtesy of a Lalrinzuala Chhangte goal a few minutes into the second half.

"I expect them to come all out at us tomorrow (Sunday), as they gave a tough fight to (FC) Goa and Mumbai (City FC) as well. But we have prepared well and we will be ready," said Renedy.

Antonio Lopez Habas is no stranger to the ISL, having won the inaugural edition in 2014 and again in 2019 with ATK and ATK Mohun Bagan, respectively. Inter Kashi sit eighth with five points from as many games and will look to close the gap with the visitors on Sunday.

However, having received a red card against Mumbai, Habas' absence on the touchline for his team's clash with the seventh-placed Blues could be a big setback to the home team heading into the fixture.

"I have been preparing well for all the games. Yes, the next match will also be tough, but when the coach needs me, I am ready to step up and play for the team," said defender Ricky Meetei when asked about how he has been preparing for the games ahead.

Villarreal cruise past Sociedad

PARIS, AFP: Villarreal cruised to a 3-1 victory over visiting Real Sociedad on Friday to clamber into third in La Liga.

The Yellow Submarine are eight points behind second-placed Real Madrid but climbed a point above Atletico Madrid, ahead of the Madrid derby on Sunday night.

The hosts, whose only home league defeats this season have been to the top two, Barcelona and Real Madrid, took the lead from their first corner after seven minutes when Gerard Moreno was left unmarked in front of goal to nod home a near-post flick.

The home team added a second goal in the 15th minute when Georges Mikautadze pounced to poke home the loose ball after goalkeeper Alex Remiro blocked a scuffed shot from Moreno.

Nicolas Pepe added a third after 23 minutes, running from the halfway line, cutting inside two defenders and bobbling a deflected shot in off the far post.

When Villarreal failed to clear a cross two minutes after the break, Luka Sucic lofted the ball into the empty net but while Sociedad dominated second-half possession, the hosts created, and wasted, a string of chances, with Pepe and Mikautadze particularly guilty.

Real Sociedad remain seventh but have a pack of clubs on their heels.

Result: Villareal: 3 (Moreno 7th, Mikautadze 15th, Pepe 23rd) bt Real Sociedad: 1 (Sucic 47th).

Ultimo for main event

MUMBAI SELECTIONS

Ultimo, from the stables of Pradeep Chouhan and to be ridden by Trevor Patel, appelas most in the small field of five runners for the Seth Ramnath Daga Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races to be run over a distance of seven furlongs at the races on Sunday.

The first race starts at 5:00 pm.

1. Dopahar Trophy - 1000M: Storm Cloud 1, Azure 2, Villanelle 3.
2. Homi Mehta Trophy - 2000M: Endurance 1, Golden Dancer 2, Exuma 3.
3. MH Ahmedbhoy Trophy - 1600M: Tajiri 1, Giant Gold 2, Juracan 3.
4. Seth Ramanath Daga Trophy - 1400M: Ultimo 1, Market King 2, Mojito 3.
5. Truefitt & Hill Royal Heritage Cup - 1400M: Ministry Of Time 1, Speak The Breed 1, Ashwa Ankara 3.
6. Racing Journalsts Trophy - 1200M: Heaven's Rhythm 1, Medusa 2, Machiavellian 3.
Day's best: Ministry Of Time.
Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. **Treble:** 3, 4 & 5.

Sandesh-ridden Scaramouch wins feature

MUMBAI RESULTS

Behram Cama-trained Scaramouch, ridden by Sandesh, won the Free Press Journal Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Saturday.

1. Mid - Day Trophy - 2000M: Manwar (Mrs Rina Mahindra) Trevor Patel 1; Savage Garden (Sandesh) 2; Renoir (Umesh) 3; Her Charge (Bhawani Singh) 4; Wb: 1-1/4, 5-1/2, 2-1/4L. T: 2:02.61. TB: Pradeep Chouhan: Allez L Etoile.
2. Racingpulse.in Trophy - 1400M: Beast Mode (Vijay B Shirke) Nikhil Parmar 1; Remarkable (Akshay Kumar) 2; Legadema (G Vivek) 3; Red Rose (Yash Narredu) 4; Wb: 7-1/4, 1, 2L. T: 1-22.12. TB: MK Jadhav. Fav: Beast Mode.
3. Indiarace.com Trophy - 1200M: Organised Chaos (Kishore Rungta) Sandesh 1; Funny Bunny (Trevor Patel) 2; Paloma (Yash Narredu) 3; Chakar View (A Gaikwad) 4; Not Run: Asterion. Wb: 1-1/4, Lnk, 12L. T: 1:10.74. TB: Adhirajsingh Jodha. Fav: Funny Bunny.
4. Race Mirror Trophy - 1200M: Key West (Prashant Nagar) Nikhil Parmar 1; Jagger (TS Jodha) 2; Aeon Flux (Sandesh) 3; Exhalt (Mercchant) 4; Wb: 4, 1-1/4, 1-1/2L. T: 1:11.76. TB: M.K. Jadhav. Fav: Aeon Flux.
5. Hindu Trophy - 1400M: Vegatha (Cheris Sport Ltd) Trevor Patel 1; Joondalup (Umesh) 2; Ashwa Brazil (G Vivek) 3; Matisse (Siddharth) 4; Not Run: Treat & Money Fair. Wb: Nk, 1-1/4L, Shd. T: 1:23.36. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Vegatha.
6. Free Press Journal Trophy - 1200M: Scaramouche (Jaydev Mody) Sanesh 1; Art Collector (Trevor Patel) 2; Big Bay (Yash Narredu) 3; Liban (Neeraj Rawal) 4; Wb: 3-3/4, 3/4, 3L. T: 1:10.09. TB: . Fav: Scaramouche.
7. Times Of India Trophy - 1000M: Desert Classic (M.N.Mirza) Trevor Patel 1; Arbitrage (P.Dhebe) 2; Pure (S.J.Sunil) 3; New Yorket (N.Bhosale) 4; Wb: 3-1/2, 1/2, 1/2L. T: 0.58.16. TB: Pradeep Chouhan . Fav: Desert Classic.

Bengaluru dividends:
I race: Rs 32w; 15, 38, 14p; Fc: Rs 435; Q: Rs 286; Shp: Rs 102; Thp: Rs 38; Tri: Rs 2,441 & 627; Ex: Rs 12,450 & 7,114.
II race: Rs 14w; 11, 22, 19p; Fc: Rs 80; Q: Rs 66; Shp: Rs 52; Thp: Rs 61; Tri: Rs 506 & 295; Ex: Rs 1,934 & 462.
III race: Rs 31w; 13, 10, 10p; Fc: Rs 67; Q: Rs 28; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs 30; Tri: Rs 70 & 24; Ex: Rs 516 & 375.
IV race: Rs 37w; 12, 15, 13p; Fc: Rs 181; Q: Rs 151; Shp: Rs 47; Thp: Rs; 43; Tri: Rs 270 & 85; Ex: Rs 1,334 & 993
V race: Rs 18w; 10, 21, 23p; Fc: Rs 189; Q: Rs 108; Shp: Rs 85; Thp: Rs 67; Tri: Rs 1,289 & 700; Ex: Rs 6,897 & 1,074.
VI race: Rs 14w; 10, 15, 11p; Fc: Rs 57; Q: Rs 39; Shp: Rs 30; Thp: Rs 30; Tri: Rs 59 & 15; Ex: Rs 277 & 291.
VII race: Rs 15w; 13, 24, 38p; Fc: Rs 95; Q: Rs 136; Shp: Rs 78; Thp: Rs 104; Tri: Rs 2,928 & 1,534; Ex: Rs 23,542 & 20,179.
Jackpot: Rs 434 (1513). **Runner-up:** Rs 118 (2384). **Treble:** Rs 117 (649).

Welbeck netted a brace during Brighton's 2-1 win over Liverpool on Saturday. REUTERS

Welbeck lights up Brighton

BRIGHTON, AFP

Danny Welbeck scored twice as Brighton beat Liverpool 2-1 on Saturday to deal a major blow to the Reds' push for a Champions League spot next season.

Arne Slot's men travelled to the sunny south coast in buoyant mood after hammering Galatasaray 4-0 in midweek to reach the Champions League quarterfinals.

But a goal in each half from the evergreen Welbeck gave the home team a fourth win in five Premier League matches, keeping alive their own hopes of European football next season.

The loss was a 10th defeat of a feeble Premier League title defence from Liverpool, which has raised serious questions over Slot's future at Anfield.

Fulham edged back ahead of Brighton in eighth and within five points of Liverpool after coming from behind to beat relegation-bound Burnley 3-1.

Zian Flemming gave the Clarets a shock lead at Craven Cottage, but Fulham hit back through Joshua King and Harry Wilson before Raul Jimenez sealed victory from the penalty spot in stoppage time.

United settle for draw

Manchester United's charge towards the Champions League stalled after twice blowing the lead to draw 2-2 at Bournemouth on Friday.

United remained third in the Premier League and stretched their advantage over sixth-placed Chelsea to seven points.

Results: Brighton: 2 (Welbeck 14th, 56th) bt Liverpool: 1 (Kerkez 30th); Fulham: 3 (King 67th, Wilson 73rd, Jimenez 90th+5-pen) bt Burnley: 1 (Flemming 60th). **On Friday:** Bournemouth: 2 (Christie 67th, Kroupi 81st pen) drew with Manchester United: 2 (Fernandes 61st pen, Hill 71st own goal).

IN BRIEF

Japan clinch Asian Cup

▸ Maika Hamano scored the only goal as a formidable Japan battled past Australia to clinch a third Women's Asian Cup title on Saturday in front of a record-breaking crowd in Sydney, reports AFP from Sydney.

The Tottenham star hit a stunning long-range strike in the 17th minute at Stadium Australia to break Australian hearts and add to their continental crowns from 2014 and 2018.

Ideal SA post big win

▸ Karthik, Vinish and Ajay struck a brace each as Ideal Sports Academy thrashed Sahyadri Hockey Club, Shivamooga 7-1 in a KSHA 'B' Division hockey league championship at the Shantinagar hockey stadium on Saturday.

Result: Ideal Sports Academy: 7 (Karthik 11th, 32nd, Vinish 18th, 35th, Prathik 37th, Ajay 41st, 42nd) bt Sahyadri Hockey Club: 1 (Gagan K J 31st).

K'taka's Sabeer clinches gold

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka's Sayed Sabeer added a golden glitter to state's tally by topping the podium in the men's under-18 400m race on day 1 of the season-opening Indian Open in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday.

The quartermiler crossed the finish line in 47.73 seconds to finish first ahead of Maharashtra's Thanish Vijay Gaddam (48.17s) and NCOE Trivandrum's Hariharan R (48.31s).

Another quartermiler from Karnataka, Vijay Kumari GK, clocked 53.55 seconds to clinch a bronze in the women's 400m event won by Tamil Nadu's Vithya Ramraj (53.31s) with JSW's Rashdeep Kaur (53.62s) taking the silver.

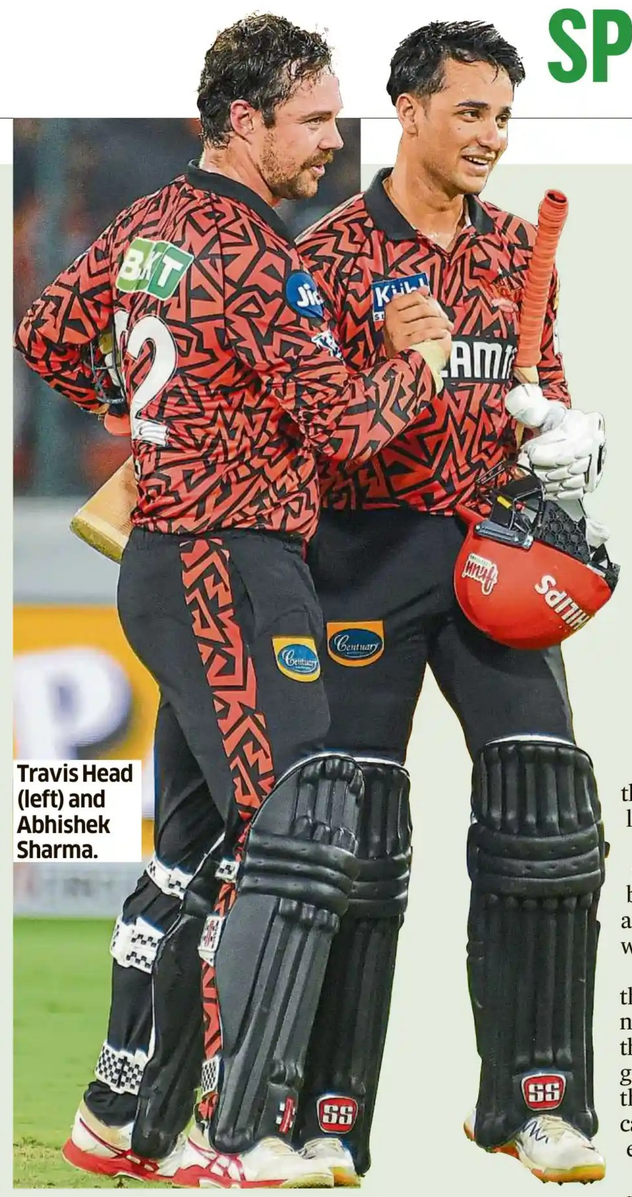
Results (only winners): Men: Rajesh Ramesh (TN) 45.26 seconds.
U-20: 400m: Piyush Raj (Bih) 47.11s.
U-18: 400m: Sayed Sabeer (Kar) 47.73s.
Women: 400m: Vithya Ramraj (TN) 53.31s, 1; 2; Vijay Kumari GK (Kar) 53.55s, 3.
U-20: 400m: Reshma (UP) 54.84s.
U18: Kashish Bhagat (Mah) 56.46s.

FIVB takes charge of VFI with steering committee

NEW DELHI, PTI: The International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) has granted provisional recognition to the Volleyball Federation of India (VFI) while raising concerns with the IOA on the delay in granting visas to athletes for an event conducted this month and pending dues of over Rs three crore from private partners.

In three separate letters to Indian Olympic Association (IOA), the FIVB has also formed a steering committee to "ensure institutional coordination between the FIVB, IOA, and the VFI interim leadership, while safeguarding the interests of athletes and ensuring the continuity of national team programmes and international participation."

The recognition to VFI has been granted for eight months.



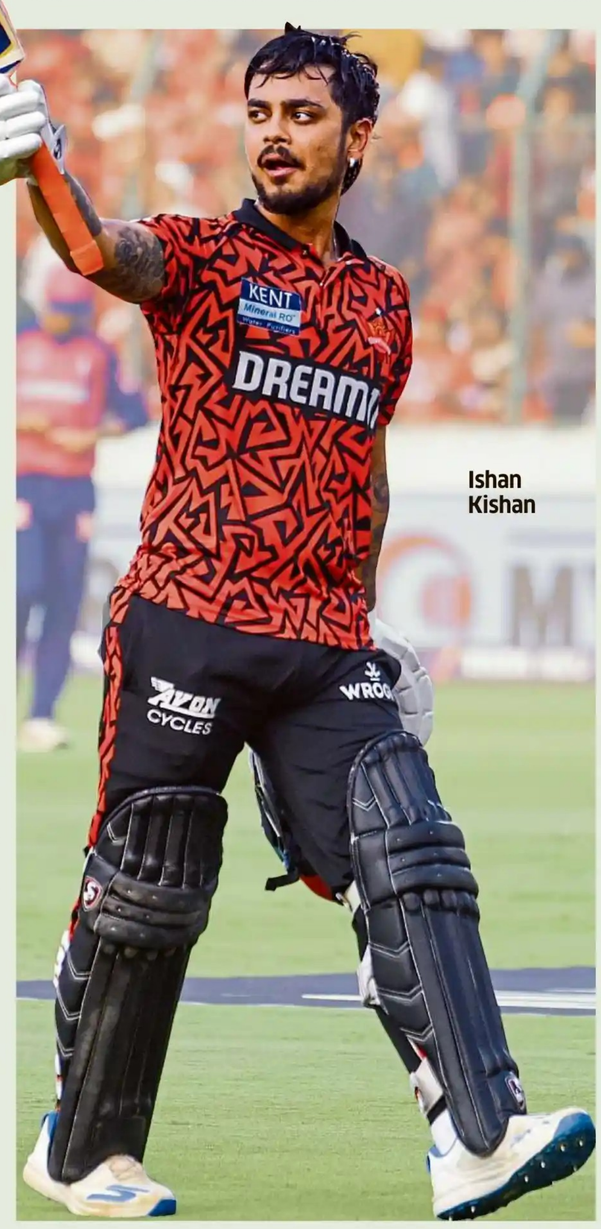
Travis Head (left) and Abhishek Sharma.

Former champs bank on box-office top six batters to deliver the goods

Sunrisers put all eggs in BATTING BASKET

"Once you climb Mount Everest, people believe that can be done and they keep going time and time again. Once we breached that 250-mark, people believed it can be done. It's high-risk but also high-reward. Maybe if we have the surface we want at home, the title could be ours this time

Varun Aaron, Bowling Coach



Ishan Kishan

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

IPL 2026
6 days to go

When Sunrisers Hyderabad are on song, they can look other-worldly.

SRH, having been given the license to thrill from skipper Pat Cummins and coach Daniel Vettori, have raised the batting ceiling to the level where the cricketing world believes they would be the first to breach the 300-run barrier in the Indian Premier League. And that prophecy almost came true when they made a breathtaking 287/3 in 20 overs against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in 2024.

The Sunrisers have also made the 100-run Powerplays thrice in 2024, including the league's highest score.

However, their biggest strength also turned out to be their weakness last season as they failed to reach 200 a whopping eight times.

That, though, will not stop them from opting the same no-holds-barred philosophy this time as well. And the final game last season will attest to that as they signed off their campaign with the third-highest total in the league's history.

SRH are a scary unit. What makes them scarier is they operate on role clarity rather than mindless slogging.

Despite having a box-office batting line-up, they also added the hard-hitting Liam Livingstone for Rs 13 crore in the auction, causing confusion and drawing criticism.

Hindsight is 20/20 and the think tank might now be wondering if they failed to do justice to the Rs 25.5 crore they brought into the auction, especially after failing to strengthen their Achilles Heel: bowling.

Their bowling, especially the death, will be in prime focus. What they failed to have last season is control between overs 16-20. Having not made any big-ticket bowling purchases in the auction, they will again pin their hopes on Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat, who can be good death bowling options.

Another important factor will be how Cummins bounces back from a disappointing season as and when he is ready to play. Given he has only played five games (all Tests) since last IPL, SRH will also be sweating over his match fitness.

Their other overseas option is Brydon Carse, who certainly has potential but failed to even make England's T20 World Cup squad. Two of their other fast bowling overseas recruits, Jack Edwards (ruled out) and Eshan Malinga (injured), add to their woes.

SRH have added a cluster of domestic fast bowling talent, but none of them has the experience to be a dependable option.

Leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari, who showed some promise early in the season last year, is expected to start alongside the talented Harsh Dubey.

Taking into account the flatness of the surface in Uppal, it does, to a certain extent, feel fair to put all eggs in their batting basket.

Heinrich Klaasen

Squad: Abhishek Sharma, Amit Kumar, Aniket Verma, Brydon Carse, Eshan Malinga, Harshal Patel, Harsh Dubey, Heinrich Klaasen, Ishan Kishan, Jack Edwards, Jaydev Unadkat, Kamindu Mendis, Krains Fuletra, Liam Livingstone, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Onkar Tarmale, Pat Cummins (c), Praful Hinge, Sakib Hussain, Salil Arora, Shivam Mavi, Shivang Kumar, Smaran Ravichandran, Travis Head, Zeeshan Ansari

Best finishes: 2016 (Champions).

Kohli looks in ominous touch as Iyer shrugs off rust

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

Following three full-fledged training sessions, Royal Challengers Bengaluru ramped up their preparations ahead of their IPL season opener against Sunrisers Hyderabad on March 28, with an intra-squad practice game at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here on Saturday.

Destructive opener Phil Salt partnered with the talismanic Virat Kohli against the new-ball attack of Bhuvneshwar Kumar and left-arm quick Mangesh Yadav.

The surface offered some movement for the quicks and first-change Abhinandan Singh drew first blood as Salt nicked him to first slip.

On the other hand, Kohli looked in ominous touch and dominated the bowlers with his wide range of shots around the park.

He started off with a wristy drive through long-on and then followed it up with a six over deep square leg. The sound of the leather against Kohli's willow reverberated across an empty stadium as he then hit one sweetly to the long-off fence.

Virat Kohli. RCB

However, he played one shot too many and was caught at point.

Mangesh concentrated on swing, looking to take it away from Devdutt Padikkal and kept it on a fuller length in the hope of inducing an edge.

It was also an indication that Mangesh is likely start the first game as Yash Dayal's mysterious absence from RCB's practice sessions continued. The left-arm pacer got married last month in an intimate ceremony in Noida.

Spin was then introduced and Krunal Pandya picked Padikkal straight away but the Karnataka batter stayed on to spend some more time to find his groove.

Krunal was in his element again as he followed Padikkal and induced another mistake to be caught at long-on.

Jitesh Sharma joined Rajat Patidar in the middle and the rotation of strike between the two was as efficient as their ability to pierce gaps. Suyash Sharma, who bowled in tandem with Krunal, struck after Patidar mistimed one to long-on.

Venkatesh Iyer, who struggled for timing on Friday, smoked a few outside the boundary rope in his second outing.

Injured Akash Deep out of IPL

▸ **KOLKATA, PTI:** Kolkata Knight Riders suffered yet another blow to their pace resources with India seamer Akash Deep ruled out for at least eight weeks due to a stress reaction in lower back on Saturday, which effectively sidelined him from the IPL. The injury put him in doubt for the one-off Test against Afghanistan in early June.

SQUASH INDIAN OPEN

Abhay, Moataz in final

BENGALURU, DHNS

Egypt's Hana Moataz and India's Abhay Singh rose to the occasion with commanding performances to storm into the finals of the JSW Indian Open, registering hard-fought 3-1 victories in their respective semifinals in Mumbai on Saturday.

Second seed Hana Moataz shook off a slow start to outclass her third-seeded compatriot Nadien Elhammamy 3-1 (11-8, 5-11, 11-5, 11-7).

Abhay overcame a strong challenge from Malaysia's Ameeshenraj Chandaran 3-1 (11-9, 9-11, 11-3, 11-8).

The unseeded Chandaran matched Abhay for much of the contest, with both players trading powerful forehands and clever angles in an engaging battle. Abhay started strongly, racing to a 9-4 lead in the opening game, but Chandaran clawed his way back with five consecutive points to threaten an upset before the Indian held his nerve to take it 11-9. In the second game, Chandaran stepped up to claim the game 11-9 and draw level.

India's Abhay Singh defeated Malaysia's Ameeshenraj Chandaran 3-1 to enter the final of the Indian Open in Mumbai on Saturday. FILE PHOTO

Tanvi, Isharani ousted in semifinals

ORLEANS, PTI: Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Isharani Baruah bowed out in the women's singles semifinals after suffering straight-game losses at the Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Saturday.

Unable to rein in her errors, 17-year-old Tanvi, a World Junior Championships silver medallist, went down 9-21, 16-21 in 35 minutes to former world champion and fifth seed Nozomi Okuhara of Japan.

Later, 22-year-old Isharani went down in straight games too (12-21, 21-23) to Thailand's Pitchamon Opatniputh, the 2023 World Junior Championships, bringing curtains down on India's campaign in the USD 250,000 event.

Akshay spearheads world-class field at Hero Indian Open

GURUGRAM, PTI: Five players from the world's top-100 and several World Tour champions will line up at the Hero Indian Open, making the 2026 edition one of the strongest fields at the DLF Golf and Country Club from March 26-29.

The world-class field will be starred by Akshay Bhatia **(in pic)**, currently ranked 22 in the world and a recent winner on the PGA Tour, and Italy's Francesco Molinari, the 2018 Open champion and a three-time Ryder Cup winner.

Besides Bhatia, the other players in the top-100 include Casey Jarvis (69), Elvis Smylie (74), David Puig (85) and Thriston Lawrence (89).

Jarvis has been in red-hot form, clinching back-to-back titles earlier this season -- the Investec South African Open and the Magical Kenya Open in successive weeks.

Defending champion Eugenio Chacarra, currently ranked 143, leads a group of eight players placed between 101 and 150.

The home challenge will be spearheaded by Shubhankar Sharma, a two-time DP World Tour winner, along with Yuvraj Sandhu, winner of the 2025 PGTI Order of Merit, previous PGTI OOM winners, Manu Gandas, Om Prakash Chouhan and Veer Ahlawat, who in 2024 finished runner-up at the Hero Indian Open and Rayhan Thomas.

The local contingent will include Shaurya Bhattacharya, Sri Lankan N Thangaraja .

Aditi moves to tied-3rd position

MENLO PARK (CALIFORNIA), PTI: Aditi Ashok carded a second round of 6-under 66 to move into tied third alongside world No. 1 Jeeno Thitikul of Thailand at the Fortinet Founders Cup here.

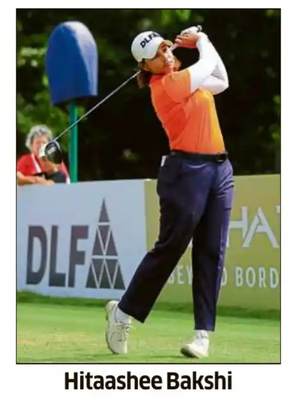
Both Ashok and Thitikul carded rounds of 6-under 66 following their opening even par rounds to move up into tied third alongside Karis Davidson, Nelly Korda, Hye-Jin Choi, Minjee Lee and Jin Hee Im.

Diksha, Hitaashee T-6

Hitaashee Bakshi and Diksha Dagar were both placed T-6 after the third round of the Australian WPGA Championship with a total score of 9-under par, adds PTI from Gold Coast, Australia.

Hitaashee carded a round of 4-under 67 to gain two positions, while Diksha put together a round of 6-under 65 on the third day to move up from T-16 to T-6.

Pranavi Urs, the third Indian to have made the cut, struggled again. She carded a round of 4-over 75.



Hitaashee Bakshi

◆ ON TV ◆

FOOTBALL

EPL: Newcastle vs Sunderland **(5:30 pm)**, Aston Villa vs West Ham, Tottenham vs Nottingham Forest **(both 7:45 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network & JioHotstar.**

La Liga: Barcelona vs Rayo Vallecano **(6:30 pm)**, Celta Vigo vs Deportivo Alaves **(8:45 pm)**, Athletic Club vs Real Betis **(11:00 pm)**, Real Madrid vs Atletico Madrid **(1:30 am, Monday)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

ISL: Chennaiyin FC vs FC Goa **(5 pm)**, Inter Kashi vs Bengaluru FC **(7:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network.**

BADMINTON

Orleans Masters: Final **(3:30 pm)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

Alcaraz, Sabalenka march on

MIAMI, AFP: World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz **(in pic)** was dialed-in on Friday, powering past rising Brazilian talent Joao Fonseca 6-4, 6-4 to reach the third round of the Miami Open.

The 22-year-old Spaniard used an early break in each set and saved all three break points he faced in a confident performance at Hard Rock Stadium, where 19-year-old Fonseca was cheered by a raucous contingent of fans.

Women's No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka held off determined American Ann Li 7-6 (5), 6-4 to launch her Miami title defense.

Fourth-seeded American Coco Gauff and sixth-seeded compatriot Amanda Anisimova also reached the third round.

French Open champion Gauff rallied to beat Elisabetta Cocciaretto 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 in a match delayed several hours by rain.

Anisimova outlasted Australian veteran Ajla Tomljanovic 6-1, 5-7, 6-4.

It was Gauff's first match since she retired in the third-round at Indian Wells.

Ukraine's Doroshchuk jumps to gold

TORUN (POLAND), AFP

Oleh Doroshchuk won Ukraine's second gold of the world indoor championships in Torun, Poland, when he claimed victory in the men's high jump on Saturday.

Doroshchuk cleared 2.30 metres for his first global podium, his win coming fast on the heels of team-mate Yaroslava Mahuchikh's victory in the women's high jump on Friday.

Mexico's Erick Portillo took silver on countback, with Jamaica's Raymond Richards and South Korea's defending champion Woo Sanghyeok sharing bronze, having both gone over 2.26m.

Ukraine's Oleh Doroshchuk celebrates after winning the men's high jump gold in Torun on Saturday. AFP

Belgium claimed the opening gold of the day in the mixed 4x400m, in its world indoor debut.

Alfred coasts

Olympic 100m champion Julien Alfred led a clutch of favourites through to the semi-finals of the women's 60m.

Alfred, whose gold in the Paris Games was a first-ever Olympic medal for her home island nation of St Lucia, won her heat in 7.06sec.

Sweden's Armand Duplantis seeking a fourth title in the pole vault, fresh off a new world record.

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Assistant Professor (Full Time)	Kannada/English/Hindi/ Journalism/Psychology/ Physics/Chemistry/ Commerce / Computer Science / Management / Political Science/Botany/ Micro Biology	(i) post-graduate in relevant discipline from a recognized university with a minimum of 55% marks or equivalent grade (ii) with NET/SLET examination or Ph.D. degree from a recognized university by UGC in the relevant subject. (with course work included as part of doctoral program).	(i) 3 years of teaching experience (ii) Knowledge of Computers. Usage of ICT in teaching
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Librarian – School	Librarian	Bachelor's in Library/Information/ Documentation Science with 55% marks.	Experience, computer skills, web content management.
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5. The decision of the selection committee is final.
6. Resorting to any sort of influence will be deemed as a disqualification of the candidature.
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PERSONAL

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I, NIMMY Samuel, D/o Late P S Samuel (W/o George Moothedan) residing at 2668, 36A Cross, 9th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore-69, change my name from Nimmy Samuel to Nimmy George

CHANGE OF NAME
I, **Sandhya Kulkarni,** residing at # 138/7, 12th Cross, Teachers Colony Road, Venkatapura, Koramangala, Bengaluru-560034, have changed our minor Son's name from **CHINMAY** to **CHINMAY BIJAPUR** vide affidavit dated 20-03-2026 before notary A.S. Narayana Reddy, Reg. No. 10685, Bengaluru.

I, CHANDRIKA Mohan, have changed my name to Aarav Krishnan, and gender to Male

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I, **PRIYANKA G,** residing at No. 35, 2nd Chavara Church Cross Road, Ejipura, Bengaluru-560047, have changed my name to **PRIYANKA GEORGE** vide affidavit dated 17-03-2026 before notary B.M. Chandrashekar, Bengaluru. Henceforth I shall be called **PRIYANKA GEORGE** only

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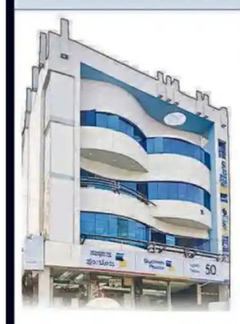

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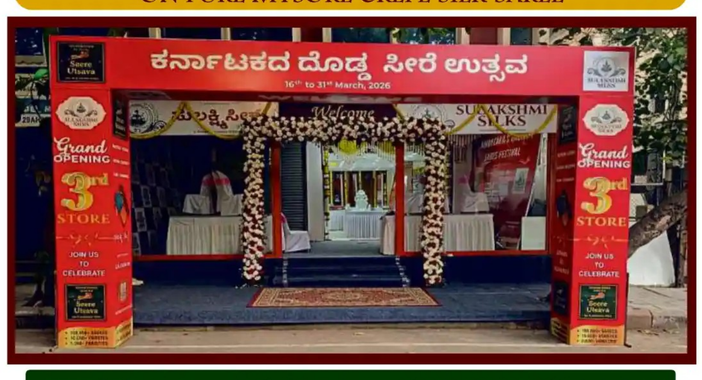

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THE BIG LENS

Wartime diplomacy: Realism shapes India's restraint

Seshadri Chari
reads between the lines on big national and international developments from his vantage point in the BJP and the RSS
@seshadrichari

The war launched by the combined forces of the United States and Israel against Iran was not entirely unexpected, considering the expansive buildup and rhetoric that preceded the offensive. The initial stages of the conflict witnessed the elimination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and important members of his team. This was seen as part of the US-Israel combine's stated objective of regime change. As the conflict extends, this goal appears to have diverged for the two principal aggressors.

US President Donald Trump has indicated that he does not favour parachuting in Reza Pahlavi, son of the deposed Shah, who fled Iran in 1979 following the Islamic Revolution. Trump appears to prefer a leader from the existing set of administrators in Iran. The condition for such a takeover could be that the Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, introduces democracy and considerably scales down the Republic's nuclear programme.

Israel, on the other hand, is looking at the absolute elimination of Iran's apex power structure. Tel Aviv is aggressively targeting oil reserves and other strategic installations in Iran, inflicting heavy economic costs. The relentless attacks aim to bring the disgruntled elements back on the streets to make it impossible for the present regime to remain in power. Iran has demonstrated resilience and launched a massive counter-offensive targeting oil reserves and US military bases in the Gulf region. The choke at the Strait of Hormuz has severely impacted global oil trade, further exposing the energy vulnerabilities of many countries, including India.

India has traditionally advocated for negotiated settlements on issues that cannot be resolved through conflict. It has consistently condemned the attacks on innocent civilians, who end up as collateral damage in any armed conflict. A case in point is its unequivocal condemnation of the 2022 killing of civilians in Bucha, Ukraine, following Russia's invasion of the country. It also backed calls for an independent probe into the incident. India's criticism of Russia's actions signified New Delhi's stand on civilians being drawn into the war; yet the measured statement did not place India-Russia relations under stress. While urging an immediate end to violence and a return to diplomacy, India maintains a neutral stance on the war in Ukraine and has abstained from the United Nations votes condemning Russia.

Amid an escalation in the West Asia war, India joined more than 130 countries at the UN Security Council (UNSC), where a pivotal resolution denounced Iran's retaliatory strikes against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Jordan. The Bahrain-led resolution was adopted by the 15-member Council with 13 votes in favour; permanent members China and Russia abstained. It demanded the immediate cessation of Tehran's strikes. By co-sponsoring such a resolution, the Narendra Modi government has avoided taking sides, while making a strategic statement signalling its concerns about the loss of innocent lives. This diplomatic stance avoids adventurism and bravado, but pushes credible engagement with all the stakeholders in the conflict.

When Narendra Modi undertook his second official visit to Israel in February, he was aware that it was happening at a crucial juncture, when West Asian geopolitics was undergoing a structural shift. It is no secret that India has a strong relationship with Israel as well as with Iran. In recent years, India has significantly increased its economic and strategic engagement with the Arab countries. It has also been a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause and has advocated a negotiated settlement on the issue. It was upon the Prime Minister to balance these diverse interests and alliances with caution and poise.

New Delhi will have to maintain its defence and economic partnership with Israel, continue its engagement with infrastructure projects such as the Chabahar Port in Iran, deepen its ties with the Arab countries, and ensure the safety of Indians working in the region. It should avoid becoming a party to the entrenched regional rivalries.

The conflict between moral grandstanding and pragmatic diplomacy has always been a point of debate in geopolitics and the practice of international relations. What matters the most in the conduct of foreign policy in the present times, particularly in a conflict situation, is the need to secure national interest, which takes precedence over civilisational underpinnings of ethics and morality. The world order is in a state of flux, witnessing the practical unfolding of the theoretical framework of neo-realism. These are troubling times increasingly defined by strong power contestation.

India has taken the best road available in the situation. It has pursued statecraft anchored in a calculated effort to insulate national security and economic interests from a potentially extended conflict with uncertain outcomes.

THE DIGITAL ALARMIST

Two regimes, troubling parallels

Barring Queen Victoria and Catherine the Great, autocrats who have presided over their peoples have always been men. However, none of them has ever amassed power without the support of a group of other men who served as advisers. Only rarely did women serve in such a capacity. Hitler, for example, strongly believed that women should stay out of politics and focus on supporting the men in their lives. Nevertheless, he more than welcomed women who served as prison guards at concentration camps or propagandised his message of the superiority of Germany's white Aryan race. In his 2024 book, *Hitler's People – The Faces of the Third Reich*, author and eminent historian Richard Evans has meticulously catalogued the extensive participation of German women in sustaining the Third Reich's brutal regime. At the top of the list of an elite group of women are two names – Gertrud Scholtz-Klink and Leni Riefenstahl.

Scholtz-Klink's official designation was 'Reichsfrauenfuhrerin' (Reich Women's Leader). Although Scholtz-Klink was not personally responsible for any acts of violence, as the head of all the women's organisations in Germany, she presented Nazi ideology to millions of women as a 'benign social and political system whose negative side only affected a minority of the population' – Jews, socialists, communists, gypsies, petty criminals, and the feeble-minded.

Riefenstahl, having achieved fame through her films – *Triumph of the Will*, on the 1934 Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, and *Olympia*, on the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin – followed Hitler to chronicle on film his military triumphs of World War II. The military commander of the area in Poland where she was filming described her attire thus: "She wore a kind of tunic, breeches and high, soft boots. From the leather belt that girded her hips, there hung a pistol. The equipment for close combat was augmented by a knife sheathed in her boot." Riefenstahl's cinematic art was highly political, well-suited to serving the interests of the Nazi regime, much like Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' elaborate machinery to spread disinformation about European Jewry.

Roger Marshall
is a computer scientist, a newly minted Luddite and a cynic

In Donald Trump's current cabinet, Pam Bondi, the Attorney General in charge of the Department of Justice, is a powerful woman. Her actions and pronouncements are patterned after Scholtz-Klink and Riefenstahl. Bondi has redefined political dissent against Trump as domestic terrorism and authorised law enforcement agencies to prosecute people for what she labelled anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, anti-Christian views, and hostility towards traditional views on family, religion, and morality. She has crusaded to persecute anyone who sought to investigate Trump for colluding with Russia and his role in attempting to decertify Joe Biden's election as President. Bondi has been active in disenfranchising large segments of the Democrat-leaning minority populations across the country.

Earlier this month, Trump fired Kristi Noem, Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, following widespread criticism of her leadership. Last year, she posed in front of underwear-clad Venezuelan migrants whom she had ordered sent to CECOT, El Salvador's notorious maximum-security anti-terrorism prison, while wearing a baseball cap and sporting a $50,000 watch. This particular episode earned her the nickname "ICE Barbie", not to be confused with Klaus Barbie, the 'butcher of Lyons' who killed over 4,000 French partisans and deported 7,000 more when he was the Gestapo chief in Lyons during World War II. Noem has also proudly admitted that she shot her recalcitrant pets and threw their bodies into a gravel pit. She was the boss of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police, the masked thugs who have been terrorising immigrants in the US. Even the Gestapo did not wear masks.

Newly-wed women in Nazi Germany received free copies of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which outlined his ideology and goals for a unified, racially pure, militaristic, and hegemonic Germany – a nation far removed from the one utterly humiliated by the terms of the Versailles Treaty imposed at the end of World War I. Hitler wanted to make Germany great again.

The ideology and the goals to make America great again are clearly spelt out in the documents of Project 2025 and Agenda 47, modern variants of *Mein Kampf*, if you will. The vision of the authors who currently serve in the Trump administration is an America which is a male-dominated, Christian, capitalist, white society.

Make Germany great again didn't work all that well, did it?

THE Z FACTOR

Oil wars are bad news for equal AI access

Of all the many fallouts and risks arising from the ongoing strife in West Asia, there is one sneaky problem that no one is thinking about: By sending the oil prices into a tizzy, the Iran war could reshape our relationship with AI and the contours of that industry.

For months, the key talking point surrounding AI has been its potential to replace human workers. A recent study by Anthropic found that there has been "no systematic increase in unemployment" caused by AI since late 2022. But the study also noted that the hiring of younger workers has slowed in occupations exposed to competition from AI.

But the ubiquity of AI transcends the workplace. People of all ages and skills currently use AI chatbots as their own personal interns and assistants. They ask them how to respond to a tricky email from their bosses, how to write code in a new language, and even how to fix their messy sleep cycles.

At the personal and social level, AI's most promising positive use might be in helping people reach a level of skill and expertise that they may otherwise have struggled with, particularly in new domains of work. It can help you learn how to build a robust Excel model, even if you haven't done it before. It can help you create a new smartphone app based on a whimsical idea, even if you know little to nothing about programming.

These powers prompted the Australian economist, Justin Wolfers, to recently argue that the way gains from AI are shared will be decided by who owns AI. If you own access to AI as an individual, it can turn you into a thinker, doer, and entrepreneur in a completely new field. If your boss owns access to AI, she can probably use it to do large parts of your job.

Shared and equitable access to AI is a rapidly evolving game – and much of it will perhaps be determined by global energy markets, which are now in disarray. More than most recent tech advances, AI is an energy guzzler on an industrial scale. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), electricity consumption from AI data centres has grown at around 12% a year over the last five years. From 2024 to 2030, the IEA estimates that consumption could grow more than four times faster than the consumption of all other sectors combined.

Mohamed Zeeshan
is a student of all things global and, self-confessedly, master of none, notwithstanding his Columbia Master's, a stint with the UN and with monarchs in the Middle East
@ZeeMohamed_

These challenges would especially hurt smaller countries. In Ireland, the energy demand was so debilitating that the government had to impose a moratorium on data centres in Dublin between 2021 and 2025.

Energy costs may also dictate the kind of AI you get access to. Not all AI models are created equal, and more sophisticated models – which perform better and make fewer mistakes – demand more energy to function. That also makes them costlier to access, and in result, some of the best, most sophisticated AI models may automatically fly out of the reach of individuals, smaller businesses or poorer economies.

In a similar sense, prohibitive energy costs may also price out newer players in the AI space. The apparent abundance of AI today is driven, at least in part, by early subsidies offered to frontier labs. But as costs rise, most AI model development may become concentrated in the hands of a few operators. The costs of training AI models are already high, given that frontier labs are still in the process of increasing their sophistication: Some believe that by 2027, a single training run could cost billions of dollars.

These are challenges that few have taken up just yet in global governance. Most global powers remain focused on improving national competitiveness by chasing the development of the best AI systems – rather than attempting to foster market competition in the sector, or improving access to those systems among individuals or small businesses.

But even the effort to build those systems – or the infrastructure to sustain them – remains concentrated in a handful of countries, particularly China, the United States, and Western Europe. Most developing economies and lower-income regions are yet to enter the conversation in a meaningful way.

The best way to fend off the risk of job displacement caused by AI is to ensure equitable access to sophisticated AI systems. That would not just improve the odds of re-skilling; it would also increase market competition, and with it, innovation.

SARKARI SECRETS

The watchdogs we can't trail

Three days ago, four police personnel were arrested in Himachal Pradesh for their suspected collusion with a drug trafficking network. They had intercepted an LSD consignment worth more than Rs 1 crore in Kullu district, but allegedly also assisted two traffickers to run the drug trade unhindered. Senior police personnel called it a heinous crime involving criminal conspiracy and grave misconduct, implying corruption. Ironically, earlier this month, Himachal Pradesh also issued a notification to exclude the State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (SV&ACB) from the ambit of the RTI Act under Section 24, which applies only to security and intelligence agencies. Trivia: The notification also spells vigilance as 'vigilence'!

Established in 2006, the SV&ACB is headed by an officer of the rank of Director General of Police and staffed with 350 personnel. It handles complaints of corruption against bureaucrats and private contractors, economic offences, drug-related crimes, and matters related to loss of forest revenue, wildlife protection and poaching, offences related to motor vehicles, and excise and tender manipulation by officers. It is also tasked with issuing vigilance clearance certificates to officials when required. Intelligence-gathering is incidental to its primary mandate of probing corruption and other specified crimes.

In 2020-21, Himachal Pradesh was ranked first among the north-eastern and hill states under the Union Government's Good Governance Index. In citizen-centric governance, it stood fourth. Given this high rating, its latest move to turn all information about the SV&ACB's working into *sarkari* secrets is worrisome.

According to official data, the average number of cases the SV&ACB probed annually, since 2020, has never crossed a hundred. Between April 2008 and March 2021, it received over 3,500 RTI applications, of which barely 6% were rejected. Less than five cases reached the State Information Commission (SIC). More recent data is not available on the SIC's website. Senior and experienced officers handle RTI matters: a DySP-rank officer is appointed as the Public Information Officer, and a DIG-rank officer is designated as the first appellate authority. The government has not offered any justification for insulating the SV&ACB from the RTI Act, despite this limited workload.

Venkatesh Nayak
wakes up every morning thinking someone somewhere is hiding something

In 2008, under a DMK government, Tamil Nadu became the first to keep its State Vigilance Commission and Directorate of Anti-Corruption out of the RTI Act. In 2014, an NCP-Congress coalition government insulated Maharashtra's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB). In Chhattisgarh, a BJP government had done the same for its ACB in 2013. Ten years later, the High Court ruled that under the exceptions to Section 24 of the Act, the ACB is duty-bound to disclose information about allegations of corruption, despite being excluded from the statutory obligations of transparency.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) secured its hall pass from the transparency regime in June 2011, under a UPA government. Afterwards, it resisted the disclosure of any information about the corruption cases it investigates, be it against others or its own officers. Ironically, a month earlier, India had ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption, which requires state parties to collaborate with civil society and citizens to combat corruption.

Five cases were filed in the high courts of Kerala, Bombay, and Delhi seeking a cure for CBI's allergic reaction to RTI. In 2015, the then Chief Justice of India, H L Dattu, directed the transfer of these cases to the Supreme Court. Ten more persons occupied India's highest judicial office afterwards and retired, but these cases remain pending. They have not been listed after 2018 because the service of notice has not been completed in one case. The wait for justice is agonisingly long for the citizens, even in matters of enormous public interest.

According to the Central Information Commission's (CIC) annual reports, the CBI has dealt with more than 25,000 RTI applications between April 2016 and March 2025. From a high of 49%, the proportion of rejection of RTIs has come down to 34% now. Given CBI's resistance to transparency, this data is intriguing. What kind of information the CBI is disclosing to whom has never been researched.

When there are multiple exemption clauses in the RTI Act to prevent unwarranted transparency from derailing the processes of crime investigation and prosecution, there is no justifiable reason why anti-corruption agencies must be marched out of its coverage. The largest opposition party in Parliament is very vocal against corruption. It can walk the talk in Himachal Pradesh by revoking the notification of the SV&ACB's exclusion, as it runs the government there.

DHARMA

The tale of two Somnaths

Devdutt Pattanaik
works with gods and demons who churn nectar from the ocean of Indian, Chinese, Islamic, Christian, even secular mythologies

Loud discussions on how Muslim raiders from Ghazni plundered Somnath temple, on the Gujarat coast a thousand years ago, ignore how Jain 'basadi' in Karnataka were replaced by Somanatha Shiva temples around the same time. This is also the time when Rajaraja Chola marched up the eastern coast of India, plundering the kingdoms of Andhra, Odisha, and Bengal and bringing back images of Bhairava and Kali.

The right-leaning historian prefers the Hindu-Muslim tales and ignores the Jain-Hindu or Hindu-Hindu conflict. The left-leaning historian uses the same information to downplay the religious motivation underlying the Turkish raids.

In academic and political circles today, the discussion around history rarely remains just a discussion. It quickly turns into a contest – a struggle to win, to prove that one's point of view is the only legitimate truth and everyone else is either ignorant or malicious. The culture of argument and debate, which was meant to refine knowledge, has been weaponised to destroy nuance.

When scholars debate, they are often not just presenting ideas; they are trying to triumph over other ideas. This was never the purpose of academic debate. The point of intellectual confrontation was once to push boundaries, to refine old knowledge by bringing in new perspectives. Today, however, the trend is to mock alternative viewpoints, to caricature opposing interpretations rather than understand them. What begins as intellectual one-upmanship in classrooms and conferences slowly seeps into the political sphere and then into popular discourse.

The study of history, especially in India, has suffered enormously from this attitude. One can see this in the polarised way historical figures and episodes are discussed. When a ruler's legacy is invoked, there are only two acceptable narratives. One side glorifies, the other demonises, and the space for critical, balanced analysis disappears.

Consider the case of Tipu Sultan, a ruler who has become a lightning rod for modern ideological battles. On one side, right-wing narratives portray Tipu as a barbarian who oppressed Hindus and destroyed their temples. On the other, left-leaning narratives describe him as a proto-secular ruler who treated Hindus and Muslims equally, who funded temples and mosques alike, and was no different from a Hindu king.

When one examines historical records closely, both positions are misleading. Tipu Sultan patronised temples in his core Mysore territories, such as the Chamundeshwari Temple and the Ranganathaswamy Temple at Srirangapatna, granting funds and protecting their rituals. At the same time, his armies looted temples during military campaigns in Malabar, as seen in the case of the Guruvayur Temple, though the idol was saved.

Neither story – the hero nor the villain – captures the complexity of a ruler who acted as both a patron and a plunderer, depending on political expediency and ideological context. But both the right and the left refuse to accept this layered reality because each side is less interested in history and more invested in an agenda.

The same distortion applies to another lesser-known historical story: the Somnath temple in Karnataka.

Popular imagination focuses on the 10th-century raid of the Somnath temple in Gujarat by Mahmud of Ghazni – an episode repeatedly invoked to depict Islamic iconoclasm. But very few mention that in 12th-century Karnataka, Jain shrines were gradually replaced or converted into Shaiva (Shiva) temples, like the Somnath temple at Lakshmeshwara. This shift reflected changing religious patronage as Shaivism rose and Jainism declined in political power.

The Shaiva-Jain conflict was not a minor footnote in medieval Karnataka's history. It was a structural transformation of society and religion. But it rarely features in mainstream political debates because it doesn't fit either side's neat storyline. What these two examples reveal is not simply distortion of historical facts, but a crisis in how we approach knowledge itself. Debate, which should ideally lead to greater understanding, has become a tool for triumphalism. Instead of absorbing multiple perspectives and creating a fuller picture, academic and political debates encourage mutual exclusion: if one side is right, the other must be entirely wrong.

A nation-state needs loyal citizens, especially when it is surrounded by hostile nation-states. This poses a problem for historians. Should history indulge the needs of the nation? Or should it criticise the nation's past in the pursuit of truth? Should we downplay conflicts of the past that can threaten the nation's fabric?

For the right-leaning, it is all about religion. For the left-leaning, religion is just cultural whitewashing; the real reason is wealth and power. The former insists they are nationalists, which makes their opponents anti-national. The latter insists they are truth-seekers and justice-seekers, despite being driven by ideology. History remains more belief-based, i.e. mythical, than academicians are willing to admit.

AI tools are increasingly ghostwriting our emotions. Is this fundamentally changing how we connect, argue, and care? When convenience replaces effort, what happens to the messy, human work of building relationships? What is this doing to how we learn, write, and express ourselves, or even how we think, wonders

Varsha Gowda

Love? AI, actually

Early last month, Shruthi, a close friend, was excited when she matched with someone promising on Hinge. In the wastelands of modern dating, this man, let's call him Joe, seemed to hit every mark of curiosity, humility and sensitivity. It felt almost too good to be true.

"I think he's using AI," she joked frequently in the days leading up to their first date.

Sitting in a booth at a busy biryani joint in Bengaluru a few weeks later, it became clear to Shruthi that her hunch had been right. Joe turned out to be a 'chatfisher'— someone who relies on artificial intelligence to start and sustain conversations. In real life, Joe was reserved and showed little interest in engaging with their personal histories, shared interests, events of the day, or, for that matter, much of anything at all.

"He was very passive in real life and was responding with single-word answers," Shruthi told me on a call afterwards.

In the race to appear quick-witted and articulate, many like Joe have turned to AI to do the heavy lifting. About 65% of Indians on dating apps admit to using AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, to create content for dating apps, according to a survey by McAfee, which included 7,000 participants.

Romantic life has been mediated by technology for years now, so this trend does not arrive as a shock. What is less clear is how AI use settles into the crevices of the rest of our relationships.

The elephant in every chat

Generative AI has become impossible to escape — an elephant in every room. Beyond its original purpose of making work more efficient, all-purpose artificial intelligence tools have begun to seep into our most personal and intimate spaces. Large Language Models (LLMs) are crafting congratulatory wishes, breakup texts and even condolence messages. Messages that were once misspelt and clumsy are now perfect, polished, and replete with contextual emojis.

But what is this doing to how we see ourselves, how we learn, write, express ourselves, or how we think?

For Pallavi N B, a content lead at a venture capital firm, ChatGPT has become a sounding board. Sharing the details of emotionally turbulent situations with the chatbot has made her feel more confident in her decisions. Particularly in conflict, the tool offers the unheated, neutral perspective she is looking for.

"I do ask it questions like, if I said this, would it hurt them? What if I said this instead?" she says.

In the past, she would have turned to friends with these queries, though she was never entirely comfortable speaking about one friend to another. The model has taken away that guilt.

"It gave me confidence and validation for a few responses, and I felt like I could trust what I was thinking and the way I was saying it," she adds.

ChatGPT has provided a steadying hand for Abhi, too, a social media manager based in Bengaluru.

"I used it with friends mostly, but yeah, also for my dates when I want to end a conversation with them. I used to take AI assistance to craft a well-tailored message without hurting their sentiments while maintaining my boundary," he says.

A message or task that would once take hours of fretting — hours of considering the other perspective — now takes less than a minute. Humans are hard-wired to take the path of least resistance, after all. So what is the problem?

The laws of friction

When Abhi and his colleagues sat down to discuss artificial intelligence and the instant outcomes it provides, the conversation turned to what we might be losing: the process itself, and the difficulty that makes learning possible.

"We were talking about AI's impact and how raw and flawed messages should be appreciated as human because that's how we evolve our communication and fine-tune it with practice and time," he says.

The Bengaluru-based social media executive recognises that his dependence on AI has increased tenfold. "At that moment I realised, let me have an authentic take on how I message, and that it does not have to be polished all the time," he adds.

Indeed, many who have used AI to assist them over the long term acknowledge that personal evolution can stall with prolonged dependence on these systems. By outsourcing our ability to think through conflict, navigate difficult situations or sit with discomfort, we risk allowing these skills to atrophy.

A classic example of this played out in the 2010s, when people began to rely heavily on GPS. There is ample scientific evidence to suggest that habitual dependence on turn-by-turn navigation leads to hippocampal atrophy, as this brain region — crucial for spatial memory — shrinks when underutilised.

Similarly, a study from researchers at MIT's Media Lab suggests that outsourcing thinking comes at the cost of learning. The researchers tested whether tools like ChatGPT might encourage metacognitive laziness — the tendency to offload cognitive effort to AI, sidestepping deeper engagement with the task at hand.

They divided 54 participants into three groups. One group wrote essays using OpenAI's ChatGPT, another relied on Google Search, and a third wrote without any assistance. As they worked, researchers monitored their brain activity across 32 regions using EEG scans.

Of the three groups, those using ChatGPT showed the lowest levels of brain engagement and consistently underperformed in neural, linguistic and behavioural markers.

Over several months, this pattern appeared to become more entrenched. With ChatGPT, users exerted less effort, and some eventually resorted to copy-and-paste responses by the end of the study.

Ultimately, AI's greatest strength — removing friction from work and relationships — might also be its biggest liability.

"By subtracting effort from life, AI risks removing the struggles that teach us, the loneliness that connects us, and the labour that makes life meaningful," a 2026 article published in Communications Psychology reads.

> LLMs are crafting congratulatory wishes, breakup texts and even condolence messages. Messages that were once misspelt and clumsy are now perfect, polished, and replete with contextual emojis.

While techno-optimists have long touted the virtues of AI, its use as a vice threatens to erode the very skills through which we navigate the world.

Curious about its performance in interpersonal conflict, Sweekruthi shared a few scenarios with ChatGPT.

"While initially I felt like the advice it gave me had value, over time I noticed that its response depended heavily on how I presented the information," she explains.

In this way, if one approaches the machine with a certain bias, it is unlikely to challenge it and may even reinforce it. Rather than spurring self-reflection or corrective behaviour, AI can entrench existing beliefs.

A study by Cornell University found that across 11 AI models, chatbots were highly sycophantic — about 50% more likely to endorse user decisions, even in cases where users reported engaging in manipulation, deception or other socially harmful behaviour.

Telltale signs of AI

If the goal is to represent ourselves at our best, or at AI's best, even that end may be undermined.

There is something about AI-generated writing that sets off subtle alarms. The unnecessary verbosity, the formulaic sentence structures, the overuse of certain words like "delve," the frequent reliance on em dashes, all contribute to an uncanny valley effect: text that sounds human, but lacks the inflexions that make it so.

When Sal, a content strategist based in Germany, received a message from an old classmate, she noticed these telltale markers immediately.

"The overly generic corporate small-talk flavour and the em dashes in every message were making me suspicious," she says.

She hadn't spoken to this acquaintance in a decade. Now, he was attempting to reconnect, but seemingly with the help of AI. Confused and curious, Sal decided to confront him.

"Can I ask, are you using ChatGPT to write your messages?" she asked.

"No response since I asked the ChatGPT question," she says.

The sense of deception proved difficult to move past for Shruthi as well. The openness with which 'AI Joe' approached their conversations was what persuaded her to invest time and vulnerability.

"Those moments of connection ultimately turned out to be hollow, and the artifice of it was too much. I stopped responding to him after that, even though we had already met in person," she says.

When asked if she could foster genuine connections with people who rely heavily on AI to communicate, Sal is sceptical. "Even if I did develop a connection with someone who uses AI to heavily edit their correspondence, would that connection really be with them? I don't think so."

A 2023 study by Ohio State University supports this sentiment. The 208 adults who participated received a congratulatory, thoughtful or condolence message from a friend. Those who later learned that the message had been crafted with AI reacted negatively.

The study concludes: "Using AI assistance led participants to perceive that the friend expended less effort, reducing relationship satisfaction and increasing uncertainty."

The idea that a friend might feed private conversations into AI to generate responses also makes Sal hesitant to share anything personal.

Pushing us into silos?

Rather than helping us navigate relationships more thoughtfully, AI assistance could push us into silos, reinforcing our own perspectives and narrowing our view of others. In an age already marked by social alienation, this is particularly concerning.

People between the ages of 16 and 24 report higher levels of loneliness than any other age group. About 73% of Gen Z say they feel alone either sometimes or all the time. Add to this the explosion of content on social media and streaming platforms, which has reduced shared experiences, and the problem deepens.

The intrusion of AI into the most intimate parts of our lives — the spaces where we find rest, purpose and connection — may only worsen this crisis.

A world of convenience can also be a world of isolation. Even at work, the integration of AI into workflows has led to a net decrease in interpersonal interaction.

"If we had to design a brand campaign in the past, we would discuss our ideas and brainstorm together. With AI, now we are able to come up with many ideas ourselves. Only the bigger clients demand AI use," says Manogna Murari, a social media marketing professional.

Friction-maxxing

Many, like Abhi and Manogna, are already grappling with how AI is reshaping their social and professional lives. In response, they have begun setting personal boundaries around its use.

Online, too, a movement that embraces process over outcome has begun to take shape. Dubbed "friction-maxxing" by humanities professor Kathryn Jezer Morton in an article for *The Cut*, the idea has gained global traction.

In an age of convenience, friction-maxxing encourages people to rebuild their tolerance for discomfort by working through obstacles instead of relying on one-tap solutions.

Drawing boundaries with AI and recognising that not every facet of life needs to be optimised for speed or efficiency may be key to navigating this new world. Even though friction can be uncomfortable, the rewards of working through difficulty are significant.

Writer Shefali Mathew, recipient of the Sir Terry Pratchett Memorial Scholarship, points to the creative process as an example.

"Although writing is a frustrating process and sometimes takes a long time, the breaks that I take in between usually lead me to think in different, unique ways," she says. "The experiences that I gain in the time that I have focused on different tasks add something to the text."

Venting frustrations, sitting with difficulty, and engaging fully with our surroundings may lead to learning that we cherish or to friendships that last a lifetime.

Is the lure of convenience enough to pull us away from the very things that make us human?

MIXED BAG

***'Mixed Bag' is your Sunday potpourri** — an assortment of snappy articles, engaging ideas and snackable nibbles about this and that, from here and there. Dip in!*

An attempt to map South Asian art

Good news for artists, scholars, and enthusiasts of South Asian art: the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP)'s expansive new online platform, which connects the region's art histories to a wider public, has been officially launched. On March 2, MAP Academy — a unit of the Art & Photography Foundations and a partner of MAP — unveiled its new name and platform, Impart. In a chat with DHoS, **Varun Nayar**, Director of Impart, discussed the transition and its implications for understanding South Asian art, research, and scholarship. *Excerpts*

What prompted this change?
Building and sustaining a serious, independent, free platform in this space is not easy. We have invested deeply in scholarship, editorial rigour, and long-term institutional collaborations. With this launch, we are laying the foundation for something we believe will have a lasting impact across museums, universities, and the public. This shift reflects MAP Academy's mission to encourage deeper engagement with South Asia's art and cultural histories.

There has been a surge in digital art platforms in recent years. How will Impart distinguish itself?
In an increasingly noisy digital space, our idea is to stand out through clarity of purpose and format. At a moment, almost any subject can be instantly searched; information is abundant, but depth, context, and reliability are not always guaranteed. Our role is to offer carefully researched and edited material that readers can trust. Rather than producing content designed for quick consumption, we focus on building structured, enduring resources that reward sustained attention and close engagement.

What makes Impart's perspective unique?
Many art institutions and platforms operate within the rhythms of exhibitions, programming cycles, and market timelines. Our purpose is different. We are not tied to a single collection, commercial agenda, or event calendar. This allows us to adopt a broader, long-term view.

Why focus specifically on South Asia?
Spanning Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, South Asia is home to a quarter of the world's population and a vast legacy of artistic innovation. The region holds deeply interconnected and historically significant art traditions that are often fragmented or underrepresented in global narratives. Its art histories reflect shared pasts that cut across contemporary political divides, revealing older networks of exchange and imagination that continue to shape the present. A key priority for us is to

represent the region more equitably by strengthening scholarship, partnerships, and visibility across South Asia as a whole.

How does Impart approach research?
Our approach begins with careful research to assess where deep and informative introductions can create meaningful pathways for lay readers. We consider the region's art histories not only through distinct objects and figures, but through networks, movements, and exchanges. We will continuously expand and refine our work, bring in new voices and feedback, and open new lines of inquiry that reflect the region's complex histories.

What are the major challenges a digital art platform like Impart faces today?
Art history is a fundamentally visual discipline, and meaningful interpretation depends on the ability to reproduce high-quality images of artworks. Because South Asian art is dispersed across public and private collections globally, securing permissions requires sustained coordination and thoughtful navigation of varied licensing structures. Managing these processes responsibly, while continuing to advocate for broader accessibility, is an integral part of our work.

GIRIDHAR KHASNIS

FEEDBACK
Like this story? Write to us at **dhonsunday@deccanherald.co.in**

ASTROSPEAK

Guruji Shrii Arnav

Scan the QR code to read the ***weekly horoscope***

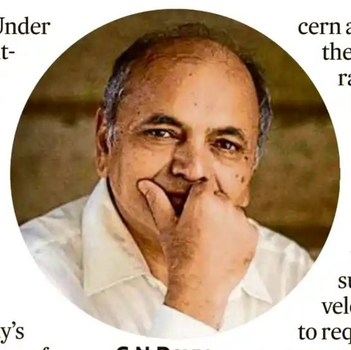
Devy's writings are a vigilant record of the present and confront the unsettling transformations of India's political and moral landscape, writes Rajendra Chenni

In the shadow of POWER

One of the questions Devy raises is why citizens do not often protest collectively and why only a small minority express dissent.
(PTI FILE PIC FOR REPRESENTATION)

Ganesh Devy's Citizen Under Siege reads like 'A Writer's Diary' in a time of siege.

Featuring mainly the columns he wrote for a Kolkata-based daily, the writings offer in-depth analysis and commentary on the national malaise we have been witnessing in recent years. They add up to a disturbing portrayal of today's India — the decline and collapse of democratic institutions, the national pandemic of ideological irrationality, the rejection of cultural and religious diversity leading to the dangerous growth of monocultures of the mind.



G N Devy.

CITIZEN UNDER SIEGE
G N Devy
Westland,
pp 258, Rs 499

These are only symptoms of a nascent totalitarian political system. What elevates the writing from topical commentary to a profound reflection are insights drawn from European mythology, Indian puranas, classics of world literature, political philosophy and linguistics. Despite such wide-ranging forays into several domains, the writings are not weighed down by heavy erudition.

Devy's writings maintain a style marked by urbane felicity and a tone of open dialogue. Together, they create a powerful impression of serious engagement with issues that concern all thinking citizens. While the coronavirus epidemic is raging in the country, the political regime permits huge public assemblies of people for election campaigns.

Decisions affecting the lives of millions of common people are taken with no concern for their suffering. Paradoxically, development and progress seem to require regression into history to reconstruct it without any validity to support violent communal ideologies. The history of global knowledge systems is dislocated to puff up the imagined supremacist idea of ancient Indian knowledge systems. The latest scientific developments in genetics are falsely employed to construct the myth of a single origin of all Indian languages.

Nor are these episodes in an absurd drama with nothing to connect them. They are products of probably the most concerted effort in the modern period of a right-wing ideology which doesn't want to rest until the past and the future are reshaped to legitimise a political system meant to dismantle constitutional provisions and curtail the assured rights of certain minorities.

Devy is able to establish this connection and thereby make clear the seriousness of the context we are heading towards. Without establishing the interconnections, the writings would have seemed to be sporadic and isolated responses to several disparate issues. It is also likely that the combined effect of the writings would be to induce despair at the helplessness of citizens.

In a powerful piece of writing, Devy takes us back to writers like Albert Camus, George Orwell and Hemingway, who, in Joseph Conrad's words, had 'immersed themselves in the destructive element', witnessing the horror of war, genocide and concentration camps. Their resolve was to 'go on doing what one should'.

Devy is hopeful that even ordinary citizens shall, amidst all despair, act according to their conscience and the Indian Constitution, which is the one unfailing guiding light. Elsewhere, the freedom movement, which created the idea of India as a secular, multicultural democracy, is also projected by the author as a cultural resource in these times of breakdown of a civilisation.

Not surprisingly, the decline is accompanied and strengthened by what Devy describes as an 'anti-science' temperament, which now dominates the educational system and textbooks. Darwin and the theory of evolution are being excluded from school education, and young learners are being taught that everything that modern science has accomplished (and may do so in the future) already existed in the Indian past. This is part of the ubiquitous assault on critical and independent thinking.

The question that is a troublesome 'Yakshaprashna' of our times, says Devy, is why citizens, oppressed, harassed and deprived of their rights, do not protest collectively? Why does only a small minority express dissent and face brutal punishment, while the majority remains silent or looks away? Why is an increasingly autocratic regime brought to power again and again? Why have our universities and research centres failed to construct a critique of the forces destroying democracy?

One of the answers Devy suggests is that 'now the Constitution is under siege by a non-state organisation and corporates.' He asserts that the Constitution is our 'primary dharma' and that the responsibility of citizens is to protect it, because it is the Constitution which has made them citizens of a democracy and not merely members of a caste or religion. In these writings, there is a fervent plea that we do not abandon our hard-won freedom and modernity, unless, of course, we are striving to hasten the coming of a dystopian future which seems imminent.

In the concluding essay, 'Towards 2047', Devy sums up what citizens under siege could do to avoid a dystopian future. The foremost effort should be to protect and nurture the federal structure of our society and culture. It should be given 'the centrality it deserves' and 'safeguard India as a plural and diverse society'. Both cultural and ecological diversity are essential to the survival of Indian civilisation. What the effort involves is 'cleansing the minds of the people of the poison of communal hatred' and also restoring democratic institutions.

The reviewer is a literary critic, writer, and scholar-activist. Views are personal.

THE HERITAGE SHELF

The many afterlives of poetic verse

Several Hindustani compositions draw on poetic traditions, often uncredited, as musicians reshape poems within the structures of raga, writes Shubha Mudgal

Embedded in the countless compositions of Hindustani classical vocal music are extracts from the works of great poets of Brajbhasha and Awadhi literature, as well as poetry in other Indian languages. Students usually inherit these from their gurus or from recordings of great masters and composers of earlier times. However, sources of lyrics are not often explicitly cited by teachers, because of which students may never realise that they are, in fact, singing fragments from a Surdas pada crafted into a khayal bandish (composition) or a dadra that borrows lines from one of Kabirdas' poems. Nevertheless, enough examples exist to establish that incorporating such poetry is a well-established convention with wide acceptance among composers.

As one of many students of music who attempt composition in addition to performance, I have, for decades, explored the literary treasures that Indian literature has to offer. While reading through a pada, doha, barvai, chhappay, kavitta and other poetic forms, I have often felt an irresistible urge to sing the words I have encountered. This translation of the written or printed word into song has been an abiding obsession for me, illuminating my musical journey and filling it with joy and a sense of adventure. In recent times, I was given the opportunity to present some of the texts included in the 10th anniversary anthology published by the Murty Classical Library of India.

From the volume titled Sur's Ocean (Sur Sagar, translated by John Stratton Hawley), I was particularly struck by a pada written in praise of Radha's countenance: *Radha tero badan ati neeko*. It set in motion the process of converting the poem into song. I remain firmly anchored in Hindustani raagdari music when I undertake such work, and within a short span, I find the raag and taal in which I would like to present the poem. These choices are personal and depend on several variables, including my familiarity and fluency with particular raags and taals. Does this imply that the same pada could be sung in a different raag and taal? Indeed, that is almost always the case, even when some anthologies prescribe specific raags for a pada.

Tempo, or pace, forms an important aspect of composition. While several genres use a BPM (beats per minute) measure, Hindustani music approaches tempo in relative terms, referred to as laya. Guided by lines describing Radha's stride as that of a grand elephant, I felt the melody must move with a majestic sway rather than in frantic excitement. It needed to be worthy of the magnificence of the goddess's gait. I therefore chose a laya bordering on vilambit, or slow. However, this is not fixed; a rendition on one day may be marginally slower or faster on another.

I chose Raag Shyam Kalyan as the base for the melodic movement. This is a raag I have learnt from more than one guru under whom I trained, each of whom taught me several compositions in it. My familiarity with the raag provides a sense of comfort that I often rely on. The prescribed time for this raag is between six in the evening and nine at night. Although nothing prevented me from composing the pada in a raag meant for another time of day, I chose Shyam Kalyan because of a reference to nishaapati, or the moon, which pales in comparison to Radha's beauty.

Structurally, compositions of khayal and thumri are divided into two segments. The first, the sthayi, functions like a refrain and forms the foundation of the bandish. The second, the antara, explores other areas of the raag, often moving towards its higher register. Using phrases that give Shyam Kalyan its identity, I structured the sthayi to begin from the middle swaras while extending the melody across a single octave. The antara reaches into the higher swaras and then descends in a zigzag manner to resolve into the sthayi. Radha's arched brow is likened to a taut bow ready to release an arrow or glance, and I attempted to reflect this through a short taan that rises to the upper tonic.

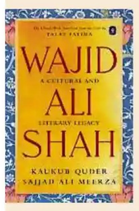
While I may attempt to describe the process of composition, it is only through the sonic experience that listeners can assess whether the translation of the pada from text to song has been successful.

The Heritage Shelf *is a monthly column from the Murty Classical Library of India, published by Harvard University Press, presenting India's greatest literary works and the enduring traditions that shaped them. The author is a renowned classical musician.*

SPEED READS

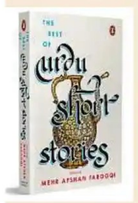
Unbound by the barriers of language, these translations from Urdu carry their lyrical grace into new worlds. What remains intact is their music.

Wajid Ali Shah by Meerza Fatima:
Wajid Ali Shah, the erstwhile ruler of Awadh, is embedded in popular imagination as the ill-fated king who lost his throne to the British and sought solace in music and dance. This obtuse narrative barely scratches the surface of a figure whose extraordinary creative legacy has been overshadowed by colonial caricatures and historical neglect.

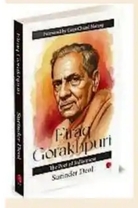


In this remarkable and deeply researched work, author-translator Dr Meerza brings to light the vast and often misunderstood cultural and literary contributions of Wajid Ali Shah.

The Best Of Urdu Short Stories by M A Farooqui (Ed):
Urdu Literature has provided a scintillating treasure house of fiction beginning from the earliest novels like *Umrao Jan Ada* (1900) to *Kai Chand the Sar-e Asman* (2006). But it is in the genre of short story that Urdu literature truly shines with a galaxy of writers and rich narratives. In this rigorously curated and distinctive anthology, lovers of Urdu literature will find the best of writers such as Premchand, Ismat Chughtai, Manto, Intizar Husain, and others.



Firaq Gorakhpuri by Surinder Deol:
Firaq Gorakhpuri's words shimmered with love, longing, and the eternal music of the human spirit. His verses —celebrated by literary giants and political leaders alike — breathed new life into the classical ghazal, blending its traditional grace with the freshness of modern thought. At the core of Firaq's vision was a deep faith in India's civilisational spirit. He lamented that Urdu poetry had not fully reflected the beauty of India's cultural essence, and he made it his life's mission to do so.



Speed Reads *is a column for the bookworm who is short on time and reads on the go.*

PIQUED

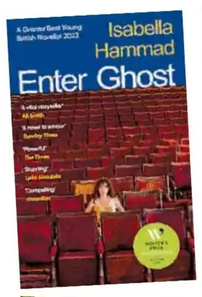
A Shakespearean twist in the tale

Nirica Srinivasan lists out a few fascinating novels that do not merely adapt the Bard's plays but engage with their many complexities

In Chloé Zhao's film adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's Hamnet, a couple grieves the loss of their eleven-year-old son in a devastating outbreak of the plague in 1600s England. Struck by grief, Agnes and her husband find themselves torn apart, unable to communicate with each other. Until one beautiful moment, when Agnes witnesses what grief has led her husband to do: immortalise their son forever, in his new play, Hamlet.

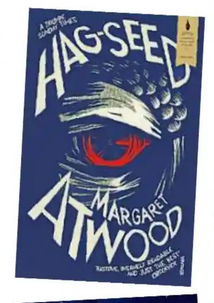
Hamnet, both book and movie, are bold reinterpretations of history. O'Farrell takes two simple facts: that Shakespeare lost his son, Hamnet, at the age of eleven, to an unknown cause of death; and that at the time, the names 'Hamlet' and 'Hamnet' were interchangeable — and spins a story that not only reimagines Shakespeare's personal life, but also reinterprets his work.

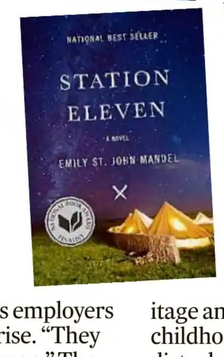
With the context of Shakespeare and Agnes's loss, Hamlet's "to be or not to be" speech takes on a new significance. In both book and film, when Agnes sees the play itself, it is an astonishingly powerful moment: it reminds us, as readers and viewers, of the power of the work to speak across time and space to reach audiences so far from its context; for the fictional Agnes, the performance has the power to speak across the veil of death itself.



While Shakespeare plays have been adapted and reinterpreted into contexts from the animal kingdom (The Lion King) to '90s Kashmir (Haider) to American high schools (She's The Man), I am reminded of stories that do not just adapt the plot of his work, but engage with the thorniness of Shakespeare's work as plays — stories that are about theatre troupes or amateur actors, who encounter the power of the plays in their engagement with them.

Margaret Atwood's **Hag-Seed** is one such: it's both a retelling of The Tempest and about a production of The Tempest. In it, we meet Felix, a theatre director disgraced from his position, betrayed by a former colleague, and hell-bent on revenge. He takes a job at Fletcher County Correctional Institute, where he insists on teaching Shakespeare to the inmates imprisoned for non-violent offences.





"You think Shakespeare's actors did a lot of reading?" he says, when his employers express surprise. "They were journeymen." The inmates at the facility throw themselves into the work with gusto. And one year, Felix finally puts on his most personal play, The Tempest, where real life and stage life will collide in wholly surprising ways. Some of my favourite parts of this book are the fast-paced revenge plot, but equally compelling are the scenes where the inmates offer their own, delightful interpretations of Shakespeare.

In a wildly different context, many years in the future, a travelling theatre company journeys across a devastated America, performing Shakespeare, in Emily St. John Mandel's **Station Eleven**. Set years after a pandemic (and written years before the one we would experience in 2020), Station Eleven offers us a wide cast of characters, from both before the apocalypse and after, but central to the narrative is this travelling troupe, and a young woman, Kirsten.

Kirsten revels in the feeling after a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream: "the state of suspension that always came over her [...] a sense of having flown very high and landed incompletely, her soul pulling upward out of her chest."

Shakespeare's words — written during the time of devastating plague — stay significant in Kirsten's world, in a time recovering from its own plague. It's impossible to describe Station Eleven in just a sentence — even in this paragraph, I'm offering you just a glimpse — but if it's about anything, it's about the power of art of all kinds, and what lengths we will go to save and savour at the end of the world.

Isabella Hammad's **Enter Ghost** takes its title from a stage direction in Hamlet. In it, we meet Sonia, a British-Palestinian actress who travels to Haifa to visit her sister. Once there, she finds herself pulled into the past — haunted by questions of heritage and belonging, remembering a childhood in a volatile homeland, and disturbed by present-day realities of the region. When she meets a theatre director working on an Arabic production of Hamlet in the West Bank, she begins to work with them. Enter Ghost is unforgettable and deeply layered — a thoughtful investigation of the link between art and politics, a story of political awakening, and as with the other books I've spoken about here, a reminder of the power of art.

Piqued *is a monthly column in which the staff of Champaca Bookstore bring us unheard voices and stories from their shelves. The reviewer is a writer and illustrator.*

READ OF THE WEEK

What is love? It is the gold thread connecting our hearts. In this light-filled and multi-faceted book, her first since being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, Han Kang draws together the threads of her work and life, tracing the connections between her interior and exterior worlds through a sequence of essays, poems, photographs and diaries. A book of reflections, of words and light, it has at its heart the tiny, north-facing courtyard garden at her home, cultivated solely through the reflected sunlight of the mirrors which she must move throughout the day, as the earth turns on its axis. In a poem written when she was eight, Han Kang imagined a 'gold thread' of connection, an idea which she explores here with luminous attention, beginning with her Nobel Lecture. She writes of the wonder of following the thread we call language into the depths of other hearts, and her profound sense of an electric current which joins writer and reader. Both intimate and illuminating, Light and Thread is a book for all readers of Han Kang's unique body of work.

Han Kang was born in 1970 in South Korea. She won the Man Booker International Prize for The Vegetarian and was shortlisted for The White Book. In 2024, Han Kang was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Excluding same-sex couples, single persons, live-in heterosexual couples and transgender persons violates their fundamental rights.

Decades after French theorist Michel Foucault examined concepts such as biopower and biopolitics, regulatory frameworks in India seem to be constantly keeping certain groups outside the ambit of protection and legal recognition, writes Kanav Narayan Sahgal

When French theorist Michel Foucault began researching sexuality in the early 1970s, he set out to examine how power, knowledge, and social institutions shaped sexual behaviour and identity in the Western world, from the 17th century onward. He later published this work as a four-volume series titled 'The History of Sexuality' ('Histoire de la sexualité'). In Volume 1 (published in 1976), he observed:

"Since sexuality was a medical and medicalizable object, one had to try and detect it—as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of the organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behaviour."

Foucault's observations eventually laid the groundwork for scholarship that not only revealed how queer bodies were medicalised in the West, but also exposed how legal and medical institutions transformed sexuality into an oppressively regulated field—one subject to constant surveillance, categorisation, and control.

We are now in 2026, and decades later, in a context far removed from the kind Foucault studied, his ideas remain strikingly relevant in India today, as we pay attention to the continued exclusion of queer communities from reproductive options under central government legislation such as the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 (ART Act) and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 (Surrogacy Act).

What do the two Acts say

The ART Act regulates and supervises assisted reproductive technology clinics and banks, while the Surrogacy Act regulates the practice and process of surrogacy by promoting altruistic surrogacy and strictly prohibiting commercial surrogacy. Taken together, these laws aim to establish legal frameworks that regulate a suite of reproductive services and curb unethical practices. But in doing so, they also adopt a narrow legal definition of who can access these procedures, effectively placing same-sex couples and certain single individuals outside the scope of the law.

Under the ART Act, a "commissioning couple" is defined as an infertile married couple, while under the Surrogacy Act, a "couple" is defined as a legally married Indian man and woman above the ages of 21 and 18, respectively. Only those meeting these marital criteria qualify to avail these services. Given that same-sex couples don't have a right to marry, they therefore cannot legally access either ART or surrogacy services.

Meanwhile, single women may access surrogacy only if they are widows or divorcees, subject to eligibility, while single men are entirely barred from availing either ART or surrogacy services.

But why these restrictions on same-sex couples? As Foucault vividly observed:

"The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as model, enforced the norm, safeguarded the truth, and reserved the right to speak while retaining the principle of secrecy."

In essence, Foucault was highlighting how it becomes the task of the state to enforce a dominant normative model—one that centres heterosexual married couples as the standard for legitimate reproduction. Under such a regime, same-sex couples are not merely overlooked but rendered illegible, because their relationships do not fit the procreative template around which the law is structured.

Decolonising laws: rhetoric only?

Therefore, despite all the rhetoric about decolonising laws, India remains tethered to assisted reproductive legislation that reproduces Victorian-era definitions of family. What's more concerning is the role of medical bodies and regulatory institutions in endorsing these restrictive frameworks.

The ART Act, for instance, originated in the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) draft bill of 2008, while the Surrogacy Act underwent review by Select Parliamentary Committees before formal drafting, amendments, and enactment by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

Although the MoHFW has recently advanced gender-affirming care and integrated health insurance schemes for transgender individuals, same-sex couples remain largely excluded from reproductive services across the country.

Furthermore, in its 2023 same-sex marriage judgement, the Supreme Court upheld India's adoption laws that barred same-sex couples from adopting, and petitions challenging restrictions under the ART and Surrogacy Acts for transgender individuals are currently pending before the Kerala High Court and the Supreme Court respectively. However, these petitions do not confront the broader exclusion of sexual minorities, so even a favourable ruling would offer only piecemeal relief. Therefore, if we are really serious about decolonising our laws, our assisted reproductive policy frameworks need to adopt a holistic understanding of family that is aligned with contemporary conceptions of gender and sexuality.

Excluding same-sex couples, single persons, live-in heterosexual couples and transgender persons from these services not only violates their fundamental rights but also leaves us governed by what Foucault famously described as an era of "biopolitics"—regulatory frameworks that constantly monitor, categorise, and discipline select populations based on state-sanctioned norms of reproduction, family, and ethics in ways that specifically leave other groups systematically outside the ambit of legal recognition and protection.

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Transgender Persons Act (2019): Fresh proposals

Meanwhile, yet another development that has generated debate is the proposed amendments to the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (2019). This intends to tear down the promise of gender self-identification as laid out in the 2014 NALSA judgement (National Legal Services Authority vs Union of India). The proposed amendments limit who gets to be counted as "transgender," and how that counting is to be determined.

Queer communities are excluded from reproductive options under legislations.

Travel

Arts that engage you and unravel many stories, a culture that stays authentic, and the quiet magic of a nation where conversations and people both feel close – head to Bhutan for reasons beyond the obvious, write Kunal Bhatia and Shuvajit Payne

Paro Dzong.

Wall paintings and prayer wheel at Punakha Dzong. (PHOTOS BY AUTHORS)

Mindfulness, Gross National Happiness, and the viral Ema Datshi (Bhutanese stew) — this familiar shorthand for Bhutan misses the far richer bouquet of experiences the country offers. For Indian travellers in particular, even those accustomed to dramatic Himalayan backdrops and ancient monasteries within our own borders, Bhutan still feels unmistakably different from the moment you arrive.

Magic of small numbers

Flying into Paro is the first revelation. The airport itself is modest, almost quaint, adorned with traditional Bhutanese architectural elements, including hand-painted motifs and wooden carvings. But it is the approach that delivers the theatre. The aircraft weaves through steep Himalayan valleys, descending sharply between mountains. The landing is so technically demanding that only a few dozen pilots worldwide are certified to attempt it.

This idea of "only a few" recurs everywhere in Bhutan and leads to unexpected delights. With fewer people than in Chennai and a population density nearly 24 times lower than what we are used to in India, institutions remain personal here and systems operate at a human scale. Nowhere is this clearer than at the Bhutan Postal Museum in the capital Thimphu, where you discover that Tashi Wangchuck is the country's sole stamp designer.

With a grin on his face, he is happy to tell you of his modest beginnings — how, at a time when no graphic design courses were offered in the country, he picked up design techniques online and landed this job. Wangchuck enthusiastically explains his artworks on the stamps displayed along the museum walls, some of which take curious forms and have become globally coveted philatelic collectables that have kept pace with time. There are stamps with 3D holograms, scents, QR-codes, and even those that take the form of playable vinyl records, CDs, and NFTs!

Cham dance.

The Zorig Chusum

The curiosity for art that underlies Bhutan's commitment to cultural preservation finds vivid expression in the country's art schools. Amongst them, the Choki Traditional Art School offers an immersive experience for visitors. Founded for children unable to access formal art education, the school provides free training in Bhutan's zorig chusum, the thirteen traditional arts and crafts that form the backbone of the country's identity.

The Choki Art School.

Students, many from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, live and train here full-time under master artisans. Their instruction spans disciplines such as lhadri (painting), patra (woodcarving), tshemdrup (embroidery), thagzo (weaving), and tshemzo (tailoring).

What makes a visit distinctive is how students chaperone you through a living museum housed in a centuries-old farmhouse. Under patient guidance, you can try block printing, paint traditional motifs, learn to write your name in Bhutanese script in brushstrokes, or even churn suja (the local salted butter tea) in a long cylindrical wooden dongmo.

Wonderland of stories

A rich narrative universe forms the foundation for Bhutan's kaleidoscope of arts. This is most evident during tshechus — the annual religious festivals held across the country. Amid the visual spectacle of swirling masks, elaborate costumes, and the rhythmic drumbeats of the sacred cham dances, it is easy to miss the layered stories being told.

Each dance encodes strands of Buddhist philosophy. Characters represent deities, protective spirits, demons, and saints, their exaggerated masks and movements designed to communicate moral lessons. Temple walls reinforce these narratives through vast murals depicting cosmic realms, the cycle of rebirth, and the deeds of revered figures.

It is a story lover's paradise. Consider the tales of the 15th-century mystic popularly known as the "Divine Madman." His unconventional methods — often humorous and sometimes deliberately shocking — were intended to jolt people out of spiritual complacency. The ubiquitous phallic symbols painted on homes and temples across Bhutan trace back to his legacy. Far from being crude, they are believed to ward off evil and promote fertility.

Everyday conversations

Bhutan reveals itself through such stories and interactions. Perhaps India's politest neighbour, the warmth with which locals receive visitors naturally opens up space for dialogue. Experienced this way, a visit to a dzong (fortified monastery complexes) can turn into an impromptu exchange with a young monk about his aspirations for monastic life. A morning in a homestay might wake you to the rhythms of daily prayer.

There is much to notice and discuss: office-goers and schoolchildren alike routinely wearing the national dress – the gho for men and the kira for women; or the ritualised banter of competing archery teams, charged by a shared obsession for the national sport. Bhutan's cultural identity is deeply embedded in everyday life, revealing its layers only if you are paying attention.

QUICK FACTS

- **April is a** good time to visit; it marks the beginning of spring and the weather is generally pleasant. June to September are the monsoon months, while October is ideal for trekking.
- **Bhutan's Gross National Happiness** is a concept introduced in the Seventies, and coined by the then king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck.
- **One of the** most popular dishes that Bhutan is famous for is the Ema Datshi, a sweet and spicy stew made of cheese and chilli peppers.

A pinch of AI in your SPICE MIX

Machine learning models can map molecular structures and predict compatible spice pairings, which can play a role in the flavour and seasoning market. But what kind of role will AI play in your kitchen when the perception of flavour relies on comfort, familiarity and nostalgia? Anjali Kochhar looks for answers

The memory of spices, for me, begins with the click of a steel masala dabba opening in my mother's kitchen. She would press her fingers into chilli powder to test its sharpness, crush coriander between her palms, and adjust proportions instinctively. Indian spice blending has always functioned as a living sensory system. It responds to humidity, to the age of stored turmeric, and to whether the dish must comfort or invigorate. A tadka changes slightly in the monsoon. A winter curry tolerates more warmth. These decisions are chemical in effect, even if never articulated in chemical terms.

Now, this unspoken chemistry is being translated into code. Across research laboratories and commercial kitchens, artificial intelligence is being trained to analyse thousands of volatile flavour compounds. By mapping shared molecular structures between ingredients, machine learning models can predict statistically compatible pairings, even when those combinations appear culturally unfamiliar. Long pepper with dark chocolate. Nutmeg with citrus peel. Fenugreek greens with fermented chilli.

A global phenomenon

Professor Ganesh Bagler of IIIT Delhi has spent years studying flavour networks and ingredient compatibility, positioning food within the language of data science.

"AI-driven spice blending represents a shift from trial-and-error to evidence-guided creativity," he explains, and adds, "By analysing flavour molecules and historical culinary data, algorithms can suggest unconventional yet harmonious pairings."

Databases that catalogue flavour molecules now allow ingredient chemistry to be computed and compared at scale. Globally, food companies are using AI tools to shorten product development cycles, reduce failed prototypes and optimise formulations before they reach physical kitchens. Instead of testing dozens of variations manually, developers can filter possibilities digitally, narrowing the field before real-world trials begin. India's growing flavour and seasoning market, expanding alongside processed foods, quick-service restaurants and premium dining experiences, is beginning to explore similar approaches.

Craft under heat

At Farzi Beach in Goa, Executive Chef Omkar Gothankar encounters AI not in a laboratory, but in the immediacy of the stove. "I treat AI like a flavour rebel in my kitchen," he says. "It dares me to try combinations that would sound heretical in a traditional spice box." **(see box for spice pairings.)** For him, however, suggestion is only the beginning. "Flavour in Indian cuisine must endure fire, smoke, fermentation and time, not just data."

The distinction is crucial. A pairing that appears harmonious on a molecular map must still withstand hot oil spluttering in a kadhai, the slow caramelisation of onions, and the way spices mellow after prolonged cooking. Technique disciplines innovation. The chef does not surrender authority to the algorithm; he tests it.

Scaling flavour

Where chefs see creative provocation, technologists see operational possibility. Ankush Sabharwal, Founder and CEO of a conversational and generative AI platform, believes the real transformation lies not merely in experimentation but in execution and personalisation at scale.

"AI is fundamentally re-engineering the way we think about food personalisation and flavour innovation," he says. "We are entering an era where culinary science meets machine intelligence, where algorithms can analyse thousands of flavour compounds, cultural food patterns and individual taste preferences to create hyper-personalised spice blends."

According to him, the system does not simply suggest combinations; it calibrates them. "The AI system can ingest, for example, 10 different spices and, based on the food or meal type and the user's preferences, automatically select the specific spices and the optimal quantity for each," he explains. That precision, he argues, shifts flavour design from instinct-driven approximation to measurable formulation.

Integrated with IoT-enabled dispensers and digital ordering systems, such platforms could allow restaurants to retain customers' flavour preferences and reproduce them consistently. "By blending tradition with intelligent automation, restaurants can retain customers' historical taste profiles and deliver food that matches personal preferences every single time," Sabharwal says. He describes this as the rise of "physical AI" in food service and adds that it is a matter of implementation. In this model, AI becomes a memory engine, ensuring repeatability with variation.

On Goa's coast, Puru, restaurateur and founder of Ourem, views AI through the lens of geography and cultural exchange.

"India's food knowledge has historically travelled slowly, through migration, trade routes and kitchens," he says. "Algorithms collapse that distance."

A coastal flavour structure, built around acidity, coconut, fermentation and sea-influenced spices, can now be digitally mapped against Southeast Asian or East African systems almost instantly. What once required years of lived experience can be recognised in seconds through pattern analysis.

For Puru, the question is not whether AI replaces instinct, but how rapidly it accelerates cross-cultural discovery. Yet speed, he implies, does not automatically confer depth. A spice still responds to climate, oil, timing and touch, variables embedded in lived cooking rather than datasets.

Psychology of taste

Rohit Dadlani, founder of Pause Mumbai Cafe, shifts the focus from chemistry to perception.

"Taste is shaped by memory and nostalgia," he says. "Two people can eat the same dish and experience it differently."

His point introduces a quieter complexity. While AI may map molecular compatibility, it cannot easily account for childhood associations, regional identity or emotional memory. Flavour is not only about compounds interacting on the tongue; it is about recognition, comfort and familiarity.

Cyril Feuillebois, founder of a spa that uses Indian spices, approaches the development from a market perspective. AI-generated blends, he says, represent "an exciting and flavour-forward evolution," one that allows brands to experiment more efficiently while expanding the boundaries of what consumers might accept.

Perhaps that is the clearest way to understand this moment. Indian cuisine has never been static. Chillies arrived from the Americas and became indispensable. Tomatoes were once foreign. Techniques crossed oceans and were absorbed into daily cooking. Each innovation survived only if it adapted to the logic of the Indian kitchen.

Artificial intelligence is now undergoing the same test. It may speak in molecules and models. But like every ingredient before it, it must prove itself in hot oil, in patient simmering, in the human memory of taste.

And somewhere, in kitchens across the country, Indian mothers will still open their masala dabbas, taste the salt, adjust the spice by instinct, and quietly decide whether the algorithm truly understands flavour.

Mix and match

- **Turmeric + star anise:** Earthy warmth balanced with subtle sweetness; works well in slow-cooked gravies and broths.
- **Black pepper + jaggery powder:** A bold sweet-spicy contrast, ideal for chutneys, marinades, and glazes.
- **Coriander seeds + cocoa powder:** Adds a warm, nutty depth to rich gravies and meat or vegetable curries.
- **Fennel seeds + smoked paprika:** Creates a sweet-smoky flavour that pairs well with roasted vegetables.
- **Cumin + cinnamon:** Brings comforting savoury warmth to lentils, rice dishes, and stews.
- **Fenugreek leaves + lemon zest:** A bright combination with slight bitterness that lifts vegetable dishes.
- **Sesame seeds + black cardamom:** Gives a deep, smoky nuttiness that's well suited for robust gravies and rice preparations.
- **Nutmeg + chilli flakes:** A balance of gentle heat and warm sweetness.
- **Mustard seeds + orange zest:** Sharp, citrusy notes that add freshness to tempering and marinades.
- **Cloves + honey:** Sweet and aromatic, ideal for glazes or slow-cooked dishes.

Wellness

Oral cavity: A window to overall wellbeing

Bleeding gums, mouth ulcers, dry mouth... while it's easy to ignore these problems, in some cases, they could point to an underlying health concern. Dental screening can catch these symptoms early on, writes Amullya Shivashankar

Oral health is closely linked to cardiac and gastrointestinal issues, among others.

It all begins quietly—a little bleeding while brushing, persistent bad breath despite using multiple products or a mouth ulcer refusing to heal. All of these are often ignored but sometimes they could point to a much deeper and serious health concern.

From cardiology to gastroenterology and oncology, specialists acknowledge that the oral cavity can act as a window to systemic health.

Speaking about the symptoms that reflect deeper problems, Dr Sindhu U Muktamath, Head of Department of Dental Sciences at a leading hospital in Bengaluru explains, "*pyostomatitis vegetans*, also called snail track ulcers in gastrointestinal issues, *xerostomia* in multiple health conditions including Sjögren's syndrome, a chronic systemic autoimmune condition causing severe dry mouth and dry eyes, and diabetes are some of the common conditions identified primarily in the mouth."

Certain genetic and immune-related disorders can also present early signs in the mouth, she added.

Conditions such as neutropenia, which affects the body's ability to fight infections or Papillon-Lefevre syndrome, a rare genetic disorder characterised by severe gum disease and early loss of teeth may first become evident through oral symptoms.

Cardiac issues

Is oral health linked to cardiac issues? Says Dr Sanjay Bhat, Senior Consultant, Interventional Cardiology, "Oral symptoms can be linked to heart problems, although they may look like simple dental issues. If a person has other risk factors like red, swollen, or bleeding gums, it can be a sign of gum infection; long-term gum disease is linked to heart conditions like coronary artery disease. Ongoing inflammation can affect blood vessels, and lead to loose teeth while constant bad breath may also point to serious gum disease connected with heart risk. Pain in the lower jaw can sometimes be a warning sign of a heart attack rather than a tooth problem; dry mouth may happen due to medicines for cardiac health, and in rare cases, bluish lips or tongue can mean low oxygen levels related to heart failure, so it is important to seek medical advice if these symptoms continue."

Talking about gum health, especially a serious infection called periodontitis, where bacteria from the infected gums enters the bloodstream and causes long-term inflammation in the body, Dr Sanjay Bhat explains that it can damage blood vessels, increase plaque buildup in the arteries and increase the chances of blocked arteries, heart attack, or stroke.

Dental screening can be considered a helpful part of preventive cardiology packages, he notes.

Gut health

Gut health and oral health have a direct connection, points out Dr Adarsh CK, HOD & Senior Consultant - Medical Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Advanced Endoscopy, adding that "they share similar inflammatory pathways."

"Crohn's disease, a type of Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), presents first in the mouth through repeated ulcers. When we check the patient's history, it would have mostly started from ulcers in the mouth. Vasculitis can also be sometimes identified by symptoms in the mouth," he says.

Dentists can help identify the early symptoms; they could be good referral doctors, Dr Adarsh CK says. According to him, symptoms include:

- Recurrent ulcers with associated anaemia
- Abnormalities inside the cheek
- Gum inflammation
- Lip or tongue swelling

"In specific conditions, oral bacteria can contribute to leaky gut, and though it is unusual, a lot of data regarding the same is emerging," he further adds.

On the oncology front

Dr Rasmi Palassery, Consultant, Department of Medical Oncology, observes, "The mouth or oral cavity, is a highly vascular area that is constantly susceptible to continuous micro-trauma from everyday activities like chewing and brushing. This makes the oral cavity a highly sensitive early warning system for systemic blood disorders. Statistically, up to 90 per cent of patients with blood cancer can experience some form of oral symptom during the course of their disease. This can present as paleness of the lips, tiny bleeding spots inside the mouth, gum swelling, or spontaneous bleeding from the gums."

She notes that a review of medical literature shows that about one-third of newly diagnosed blood cancer patients first seek medical help because of a symptom they noticed inside their mouth.

ORAL HEALTH AND BLOOD CANCER

According to Dr Rashmi Palassery, the following oral issues may be seen in newly diagnosed blood cancer patients:

- **Anaemia:** A classic sign of anaemia (when haemoglobin is low) is visibly pale lips. A red, painful, or completely smooth tongue, called atrophic glossitis, especially when associated with nutritional deficiencies, like iron or vitamin B12 deficiency, is another sign associated with anaemia.
- **Bleeding disorders:** Blood oozing from the gums outside of brushing times, or tiny red blood spots inside the mouth, is a much more concerning feature. It points towards an underlying blood problem.
- **White blood cell disorders:** When a patient's white blood cells are low, they are much more susceptible to getting severe and recurrent oral ulcers. Similarly, certain cancers of the white blood cells, like leukaemia, can initially present as a noticeable swelling or inflammation of the gums, which is termed gingivitis.

BIOHACK OF THE WEEK

How to keep your memory sharp

Brain atrophy is an important factor contributing to episodic memory loss in ageing, says a 2025 Nature study that involved over 3,700 cognitively healthy adults. Episodic memory is the memory of a specific event or a personal experience — for instance, your first day at work. There are other forms of memory, such as short-term memory, where there is a temporary storage of information that can be of use in immediate situations, or semantic memory where you store general information and facts.

While occasionally forgetting where you placed your keys is considered normal, a cognitive decline needs attention. Instances include losing your way in places that are otherwise familiar to you, or having trouble performing everyday tasks like cooking or driving.

Here are ways in which you can keep your memory sharp, no matter what stage of life you are at:

- Constantly learning new things is one of the best ways to sharpen your memory. When you try to learn a new language, play chess, solve a crossword puzzle or sudoku, or read a newspaper, your brain cells are stimulated.
- One exercise that will help you preserve your episodic memory is to take up a recall test at the end of each day – list out some nice things you saw during the day or read a small paragraph and remember it later.
- Make sure you consciously recall scents, sights and sounds of a particular episode. This could be scenes at a market or impressions from a destination you recently visited, so your sensory memory is active.
- Staying organised and structured also helps you steer clear of mental clutter, and allows you to retain new information and build memory. Information overload by way of endless online scrolling also affects memory retention.
- Physical well-being is linked to mental well-being; make sure to get some exercise, and prioritise sleep. Sleep plays a key role in converting short-term memory into a long-term one. Ensure you follow a diet rich in leafy vegetables, omega-3 fatty acids, and other nutrients.
- Having meaningful connections also boosts brain function – so stay connected with family and loved ones.

*Curated by Savitha Karthik (***Biohack of the Week** *offers actionable tips to optimise your wellbeing.)*

POT-POURRI

For Sheila Kumar, a dance performance in a Granada cave opened a window into the complicated history of Europe's Roma, who have a strong Indian connect and are often treated as outsiders

The flamenco diaspora

A gypsy dancer in a traditional costume.

I'm sitting inside a small cave high up in a barrio (district) in the Sacromonte hills of Granada in Spain, which has willy-nilly been home to marginalised groups like the Romani gypsies since the 15th century. I'm all set to watch them dance. The walls of the cave dwelling are rough in texture and whitewashed. Copper and brass utensils hang from the rafters and on the walls, and look familiar: pots, pans, woks, lotas, the likes of which we see back home in India.

This is not surprising because the gypsies were pilgrims, mostly Hindus, who had set off from Rajasthan, Sindh and Punjab to wander over Persian lands and beyond to Europe between the 5th and 11th centuries.

One look at the gypsies (the nomenclature came from the time they spent in Egypt), and the India connect is unmistakable: the colour of their skin, the bone structure of their faces, their mostly long black hair. The linguistic parallels include many words like *nak* for nose, *dant* for teeth, *yek* for one, and *trin* for three.

India has acknowledged them, though. At a 2016 international Roma convention in Delhi, then Indian external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj told delegates, "You are the children of India who migrated and lived in challenging circumstances in foreign lands for centuries. Yet you maintained your Indian identity. You are indeed the first flag-bearers of Indian culture overseas." She was echoing Ms Indira Gandhi, who, in 1983, had said pretty much the same thing at a festival of Roma culture in Chandigarh.

Today, there are estimated to be around 10–15 million gypsies of Indo-Aryan origin across Europe, part of bifurcating subgroups and sects, most of them leading very marginalised lives.

Roma people dancing, singing and playing instruments at a Roma festival in Brno in the Czech Republic.

The 'non-people'

Consider these 2025 news snippets. July: Germany and the Czech Republic reported increased attacks on the Roma. June: the Roma community was targeted in the Ballymena riots in Northern Ireland, and large numbers fled the town. May: the leader of a Portuguese political party questioned why houses were being built for gypsies instead of "normal people." A report by Bridge EU and several NGOs revealed that over €1 billion in EU funding supported projects that reinforced segregation, such as separate housing for Roma, across six EU countries.

A watercolour painting of female gypsy dancers.

Consider their history. During the Nazi rule, Hitler ordered a genocide of the Roma (the porajmos), and it is believed that between 1,500,000 and 220,000 gypsies were killed. In the 1600s, the Gitano language, costume and music were all banned in Spain; settlements were broken up, gypsies were forced to marry outsiders, and they were denounced and excluded from public office.

While the present-day Spanish Constitution protects the Roma's fundamental rights, and there are special programmes for education, you don't see too many of them living in common housing or sending their children to neighbourhood schools.

In Spain, our tour guide warned us throughout that we weren't to encourage, lock eyes with or indulge in any conversation with the gypsy "vagrants and beggars" we'd meet in Seville or Granada.

And on a recent visit to Portugal, I was told that the gypsies were a perpetually drunk, violent lot who married their girls off at 13 and prized virginity, thus refusing to move with the times.

The Museo Cuevas del Sacromonte displays the history of the cave dwellings and the way the region's Roma residents live, which to me seems a celebration in the midst of ghettoisation.

Painful irony

And yet, and yet. Their contribution to music and dance has been invaluable across the very Europe that refuses to accept them. Professional gypsy musicians learned Spanish flamenco rhythms, added their own strains, and underpinned the whole with passion. People flock to watch the gypsies dance, enjoy the Andalusian art form of flamenco or attend a classical guitar concert season after season.

The legendary opera Carmen gets its inspiration from a dark-eyed, dark-haired gypsy femme fatale. The Spanish writer Lorca has written about celebrating the gitanos. The gypsy celebrity line-up includes musicians like Django Reinhardt, Charlie Chaplin, Elvis Presley, Yul Brynner, Rita Hayworth ...and Bill Clinton on his mother's side!

The Bollywood touch

Back to that cave. The dance I watch is full of sound and fury. Some facts are lost in translation, but it resembles a typical Bollywood drama. The heroine is dragged away from her suitor by an irate parent; she goes into a (dancing) decline, but love triumphs, and they marry, wearing suitably resplendent wedding costumes for the last set.

The moment the dance gets over, and the floor is thrown open to the tourists, one of the dancers comes straight up to me and asks me to join them. I demur, smile, and, in a possible non sequitur, tell him I am from India. He nods knowingly but makes no further overtures. While most of them are aware of their Indian origins, they naturally identify more with the countries where they are still struggling to carve a niche.

When I emerge from the barrio, I leave with much to think about. The Roma, silent and impassive when not performing, are still foreigners in the lands they have chosen as their own. Therein lies their tragedy.

MUSEUM MATTERS

Stones that speak of Goa's history

Inside a modest college campus in Pernem, a small archaeology museum, built patiently over 15 years by a historian and his students, pieces together Goa's past, writes Arti Das

When you land at Goa's Manohar International Airport in Mopa and take a slight detour towards Sant Sohirobanath Ambiye Government College and Research Centre in Pernem, you encounter an unexpected window into Goa's past. Tucked inside the college campus is a modest archaeology museum where history quietly survives in stone and wood.

The Museum of the Centre for Archaeological Studies houses around 40 artefacts dating from the 6th to the 17th century. What makes the museum remarkable is not just the antiquity of its objects, but the story of how they were gathered — through years of patient effort by historian Dr Rohit Phalgaonkar and his students.

The museum, which opened recently, reflects nearly 15 years of work by Phalgaonkar, assistant professor in the Department of History, and a group of students who have collected, revived and restored these objects.

For Phalgaonkar, the Centre for Archaeological Studies — of which the museum is a part — was born out of necessity. With the introduction of a new archaeology course under the Skill Enhancement Course (SEC) of Goa University, teaching the subject without access to field material became a challenge.

"Archaeology is one of the primary sources of history," says Phalgaonkar. "Teaching this course could be a challenge, as practically no excavation work is happening in Goa. That's why this Centre came about — to create awareness about it."

Sculptures of Yetaal and Betaal, both considered to be guardian spirits.

The idea soon found institutional support. "The present Education Secretary, Prasad Lolayekar, who was then the director of higher education, realised the need for the same. We then identified the sorting room of the library for this museum," he explains. Juao D Costa, principal of the college, believes the museum offers more than a display of artefacts. "The museum provides an opportunity for researchers and students of all ages to experience our past and preserve it for future generations. Researchers from within and outside Goa visit our campus to explore and learn about our legacy," he says.

Phalgaonkar, who has long researched Goa's temple artefacts and their history, often found himself being contacted by locals whenever ancient objects surfaced. One of the earliest discoveries came from the village of Usgao, where residents handed over four sculptures of mother goddesses that had been found on the steps of a water tank. "Out of the four sculptures, two are of Saanteri, which are important for Goa's cultural history. They show the development of the icon of Saanteri, who is otherwise worshipped in the form of an anthill along the Konkan belt," he explains.

Wooden statues of 'dvaarpaals'.

Among the most striking objects in the collection is a sculpture of Vishnu dating back to the 5th or 6th century, from the Chalukyan period. "It was found in three pieces in the Bhagavati temple at Tuem in Pernem. It was handed over to us, and we carried out the restoration of the sculpture," says Phalgaonkar.

Another rare find is a 12th-century idol of the Vedic god Indra. "It's a unique one as it was fished from the water tank of Chamundeshwari temple in Pilgao in 2010. Actually, we received many artefacts from this temple, like the wooden dvaarpaals and also a deity of Kaalbhairav," he says.

The Kaalbhairav sculpture, dating to the 16th century, holds particular linguistic significance. "It has an inscription on its back, which is probably the first mention of Konkani script, deciphered by me. It's the first inscription in Konkani which mentions Goa as 'Goem' and 'Goyant'," he adds.

The museum's collection also includes several remarkable wooden artefacts. One of them is a heavily decorated 17th-century wooden ceiling panel measuring about three metres by three metres, with intricately carved lotuses. It once belonged to the Betall temple in Poinguinim, Canacona.

When the temple underwent renovation, the ceiling was removed and eventually handed over to the Centre. But it arrived in fragments. Restoring it became a hands-on lesson for students. "Our students were trained to conserve and restore the ceiling. It took three days," says Phalgaonkar, recalling a workshop on wood conservation techniques organised by the college.

Another wooden masterpiece is a 16th–17th century temple chariot from Sanguem. Crafted from local jackfruit wood, it features carved crocodile faces jutting out from its base, each holding a movable wooden ball in its mouth. The structure weighs nearly two tonnes.

"This artefact is the best example of local carpentry and could become a reference to study this skill of Goa," Phalgaonkar notes.

MELODY MAKERS

A musical sojourn through big cat terrain

Sarod brothers Amaan and Ayaan have tuned into India's wilderness for their new album, which is a sonic tribute to tiger conservation. Shilpi Madan has the details

Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash belong to a new generation of sarod legends. Their repertoire stretches across a breathtaking range of ragas, carried to audiences worldwide through spectacular performances. The year has already opened on a high note: a collaboration with Yungblud at Lollapalooza India, contributions to Gorillaz's ninth studio album The Mountain, and the crowning achievement, the Grammy-winning Meditations: The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The brothers, though, remain characteristically modest. Their attention has already turned to Celebrating Our Tigers, the album they have released as goodwill ambassadors for WWF, celebrating India's tiger population, the largest in the world. "We always wanted to see our instruments in places where they hadn't been seen before," says Ayaan. "Music is something so universal, and when you collaborate, it carries a larger message. Beyond borders, we're all one, the same souls."

Their *abba*, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan's three-decade relationship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, brought Amaan and Ayaan into close contact with him. The album emerged out of that long and deep association. "We have been to Dharamshala and played on HH Dalai Lama's 80th birthday, so the album

The cover of the new album.

has distilled a relationship built over the years. It was nominated in the audiobook section at the Grammys — many people weren't even aware of the nomination, but then we won," shares Amaan.

Two sarods, one voice. As luck would have it, Ayaan fell ill, and the brothers ended up missing the ceremony in the US. Yet the modest nonchalance remains evident in their voices as they dive straight into their next project — Celebrating Our Tigers.

The siblings grew up following the tuskered trail, sojourning through jungles in the hinterland. The song of the wilderness gained a new dimension when Ayaan's twins were born and grew into the wildlife journey in an organic, natural way. That curiosity soon led to deeper explorations of India's national parks — leaf-peeping and tiger spotting across landscapes such as Corbett, Sunderbans, Pench, Kaziranga, Bandhavgarh and Ranthambhore.

"It was such a humbling experience, falling into quiet sync with the jungle that follows its own rhythm," says Ayaan.

Through the new album, their musical prowess becomes the fulcrum for supporting wildlife awareness. The compositions move fluidly through the tigerish terrain, unfolding the stunning expanse and beauty of India's wilderness. The project is also a visual ode. Narratives by distinguished wildlife photographers, including Karam Srivastava, Shivang Mehta and Kalyan Varma, come together to create a wild tribute to India's consistent conservation efforts and achievements.

Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash

Their cultural fluency has played a key role in expanding the reach of their music on a global scale. "We've always tried to do things differently. I feel that to be contemporary, you don't have to murder tradition. It can all exist together in harmony," says Amaan.

"We have been very lucky to have our father as our guru, who is happy doing things outside the box. Today, when I look back on the numerous collaborations and projects my brother and I have done, I think every project came from a place of calling. Every project has a story. And that's extremely important for us."

The feeling of oneness runs through everything they do. Their family itself is a cohesive unit. "Our mother's a Hindu and our father's a Muslim, and they are both very spiritual, not ritualistic," shares Ayaan.

"Music is the greatest wealth we have in our family. Whatever we do, we try to give back. Working with musicians who don't get to perform on stage, with those who are out of work, and more — it is our small effort to give back through our music, the only language we know."

For the brothers, there is also a sense of spiritual guidance in their art. "Often we go on stage planning to play something and end up moving along another plane. That is the energy," Ayaan says. "I feel you must convey who you are through your craft consistently, without slipping into complacency — especially considering we have seven generations of music behind us."

Music, for Amaan and Ayaan, remains a journey in progress. As they move with the effrontery and ease of born geniuses, feeling their way through a repertoire nourished over years, humility stays firmly in place. Up next is Gorillaz's upcoming album, where they have played the title track, alongside multiple stage shows — including a treasured performance in the jungle at Corbett National Park. They can't wait.

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